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ABSTRACT

A passive participant observation method was used in three classrooms to determine the decision-making opportunities provided by special education teachers to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years (N=105). Teachers provided such opportunities through verbal directions, nonverbal communications, and in the organization of classroom materials and activities. Using M. Shevin and N. Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities, the opportunities observed were ranked in frequency from highest to lowest as follows: (1) decision to engage in an activity; (2) miscellaneous category; (3) choices among activities; (4) alternative means to accomplishing objectives; (5) decision to terminate an activity; and (6) choice of partners. More decision-making opportunities were provided in the homemaking classroom than in classrooms covering office skills or custodial/grounds maintenance skills. More decision-making opportunities were offered during morning hours, and more to individual students than to groups. Students' responses to decision-making suggest a hierarchy may exist from complex decisions, such as choosing alternative means to accomplish objectives, to simple decisions, such as food preferences. Teacher education programs should emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in providing decision-making opportunities. Expansion of the Shevin and Klein system is recommended to include such categories as choice of work location. (JDD)

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APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Decision-Making Opportunities Provided to Moderately and Severely Intellectually Limited Students, Ages 16-21 Years, within Special Education Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Decision-Making Opportunities Provided to Moderately and Severely Intellectually Limited Students, Ages 16-21 years, within Special Education Classrooms

Beverly Dupack Rose, Doctor of Education, 1986

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Nancy R. King
Assistant Professor
Department of Education Policy, Planning and Administration

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to observe, describe, and analyze the types of decision-making opportunities provided by teachers to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were proposed:

1. What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21, within special education classrooms?
2. How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?
3. What are the students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them?
4. Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this study? Can it be

expanded to include other categories?

PROCEDURES

The researcher used passive participant observation procedures to observe, describe, and analyze the decision-making opportunities teachers provided to their students within three special education classrooms. Shevin and Klein's (1984) category system of choice-making opportunities was used to classify data. A miscellaneous category was added for those decision-making opportunities which could not be classified according to the categories proposed by Shevin and Klein.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate the following:

1. Most decision-making opportunities observed were in categories 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) -- 41%, 6 (miscellaneous) -- 32%, and 1 (choices among activities) -- 15%.
2. Differences did exist among classrooms in the number of decision-making opportunities observed. The more work-oriented a classroom program was, the less decision-making opportunities were observed.
3. Students <u>did</u> demonstrate abilities to make choices when given the opportunity to do so although some types of decisions may be more difficult than others.
4. Shevin and Klein's category system failed to account for

one-third of all decision-making opportunities observed. This research suggests the need for additional categories.

5. The teachers in this study provided more decision-making opportunities to their students during morning hours and more choices were given to individual students compared to groups of students.

IMPLICATIONS

Possibilities exist for teachers to provide opportunities for decision-making among their students. The curriculum should address this area explicitly. Future research should include further investigation of the cateogry system, limited vs. multiple choices, student-initiated decisions, student perceptions, and group decision-making.

DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED TO MODERATELY AND SEVERELY INTELLECTUALLY LIMITED STUDENTS, AGES 16-21 YEARS, WITHIN SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

by
Beverly Dupack Rose

Dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
1986

FOREWORD

As a teacher of handicapped youngsters and adults for the past ten years, I have become increasingly committed to a philosophy of special education which advocates educational programs for all handicapped students to assist them in becoming participating members of their families and communities. Inherent in this philosophy is also the belief that special education should be geared to developing as much independence as possible for the handicapped population.

Independence encompasses certain rights and responsibilities -- one of these is the right to make choices and decisions for oneself. Special education professionals have focused their efforts on teaching their handicapped students independence in areas such as self-care and personal-social skills. This is, of course, an important first step in helping the handicapped to become independent. However, I believe that the responsibility does not end there. We must go further to develop independence as a long range goal. Handicapped students, like their normal counterparts, need to be given opportunities to make choices and decisions to the extent that their abilities allow them to do so. Decision-making is an ever present fact of life and students need to learn to be effective in the way they make choices and decisions.

This study was conceived out of a growing commitment on my part to the belief that handicapped students should be given opportunities to make decisions for themselves. If

society is to expect the handicapped to become competent and productive members of family and community, then special education has a shared responsibility with the family and community for preparing handicapped students to meet the demands and challenges of daily living. One demand and challenge that people face everyday is the need to make choices and decisions. It is to this end that we must now focus our attention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the planning and implementation of this research study. First, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the guidance provided by Dr. Nancy King; her enthusiasm for this project was consistent throughout. Each of my committee members added a "special touch" to this research endeavor. I am grateful to Dr. Louise Berman for sparking my initial interest in the topic of decision-making. Dr. Jessie Roderick provided valuable assistance to me as I began thinking of my methodology; Dr. Francine Kohl also offered insightful suggestions in this area. I owe special thanks also to Dr. George Gabriel who facilitated the acceptance of my project within the school system. I am appreciative of having a cohesive and mutually supportive committee to assist me in this project.

The participation and cooperation of the teachers involved in this study was, of course, invaluable. I share many happy memories with these three teachers -- I have come to know them as caring individuals who are dedicated to the philosophy of special education.

I wish to also thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Dupack Sr., who instilled in me the ambition to undertake this project. To my husband, Mike, and my daughter, Angela, I remain grateful for their love and patience as I devoted many hours to my work. Many of my family members and friends have been sources of constant encouragement as I progressed

through each phase of this study. This research project is dedicated to all of these people -- it is as much a part of them as it is of me.

Finally, Ms. Grace Sobrio deserves special commendation for the precise typing she has done on this manuscript. Revisions were always completed punctually and I am thankful for this assistance.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"MAN ULTIMATELY DECIDES FOR HIMSELF! AND, IN THE END, EDUCATION MUST BE EDUCATION TOWARD THE ABILITY TO DECIDE." (Frankl, 1967, p. xvii)

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

Federal Law (Public Law 94-142) and Maryland Law (State Bi-Law 13.04.01) mandate free, appropriate public education for all handicapped youngsters to age 21. After this age, local education agencies are no longer held legally responsible for providing programs and services to the handicapped. Consequently, social service agencies and private organizations for the disabled have attempted to assume responsibility for the vocational programming needs of a growing number of handicapped adults. Unfortunately, adequate funding is often unavailable for the actual implementation of such programs. The result is that many special education students, after leaving public school, are unable to find appropriate work training programs to facilitate their transition into the community.

Special education professionals have become increasingly concerned about meeting the future vocational needs of older handicapped students and many schools have developed work training programs to facilitate a more comfortable transition into the community and adulthood. Because vocational

programs for handicapped adults are generally unavailable, an increasing demand is placed upon school systems to provide adequate work training programs to teach older handicapped students to function as independently as possible.

As the student's independence grows, the probability of their finding appropriate job placements or vocational programs within the community also increases. Thus, schools must teach students to become as independent as possible in their ability to perform functional living skills. Inherent in this goal of independence is the concept of decision-making. As every adult knows, the daily pressures of work, family, and society in general require individuals to solve problems and make choices every day. Therefore, if students are expected to function as independently as possible, decision-making opportunities must be provided to them. Students must encounter opportunities to make decisions and choices within the daily activities of classroom programs before they leave school and move on to the adult world.

This study has been conceived out of a growing interest in the topic of student decision-making as it relates to the special education curriculum. It is an attempt to observe, describe, and analyze opportunities for decision-making among moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within their educational and work training programs.

Chapter I provides a general framework for the study. The researcher's perception of the significance of the study

is discussed first. The basic purpose and procedures of the study are also provided. In addition, the research questions are outlined. Assumptions basic to the study, definitions of terms, and limitations of the study are also included in Chapter I. Finally, a brief summary of the remainder of the chapters concludes Chapter I.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The ability to make decisions is a most unique human quality. The opportunity to make decisions can provide an individual with freedom of purpose and a feeling of control over one's own actions. For purposes of this research project, decision-making is defined as the process of choosing between or among alternatives (Stevenson, 1973). Decision-making involves making choices (Shevin and Klein, 1984).

Decision-Making and the Regular Education Curriculum

Research regarding decision-making and the regular education curriculum indicates that students who are given opportunities to make decisions in the classroom situation tend to demonstrate better interactions with teachers, show more initiative, contribute more ideas to the classroom, and generally reflect more positive attitudes toward school (Mancini, Cheffers, and Zaichowsky, 1976). In addition, Martinek, Zaichowsky, and Cheffers, (1977) concluded that children who were allowed to make decisions in the classroom felt stronger feelings of acceptance from the teacher and had

a more positive self-concept. John Dewey (1938) recognized the need for learners to be actively "engaged" or involved in their environment. Educators can promote such engagements by stimulating students to take part in the decision-making process within the classroom. If decision-making opportunities are not allowed, students become passive recipients of a prescribed curriculum and the stage is set for alienation which ultimately hinders learning and is debilitating to the individual (Boyle and Comfort, 1974). Decision-making is thus an essential component of the school curriculum:

> We need to teach decision-making so the individual can live a more vital life. The individual who fails to see the range of choices available to him may live a routinized life within narrowly defined boundaries. The person who sees that the present may be a turning point between the past and the future may learn the beauty, symmetry, delight novelty, and potential good for one's self and others that can emerge from well designed decisions (Berman, 1968, p. 105).

Decision-Making and the Special Education Curriculum

Most research regarding decision-making and the school curriculum has been conducted with "normal" elementary and secondary school students. Only recently have educational researchers recognized the importance of teaching choice-making skills to handicapped students (Shevin and Klein, 1984). Still, there is a paucity of literature dealing with the issue of decision-making related to the special education curriculum. The virtual non-existence of research in this field appears to indicate that decision-making is not a

priority in the education of the handicapped population. Yet, the goals of special education programs highlight decision-making as an important component of the curriculum.

Special education programs are mandated to meet the unique learning needs of handicapped students. The goal of these programs is the development of competence within each individual student. "Competence" can be viewed as the ultimate direction of human growth (Gray, 1983, p. 19), to develop the "ability" to carry on effective interactions with the social as well as the non-social environment (Ross and Ross, 1973, p. 20). The goal of special education, then, does not differ markedly from a goal of regular education--that is, to educate children to be competent, productive human beings.

The notion of competence includes three basic components:

1) the ability to select and use information from the environment in developing appropriate strategies for action;
2) the ability to initiate the behavioral activities necessary to carry out these plans; and
3) the ability to learn from one's successes and failures by developing new strategies for action (Connolly and Bruner, 1973, p. 3).

Competent human beings are thus able to solve problems and make effective decisions. A child of normal intelligence begins to develop these abilities early in life through solitary play with toys and social play with adults and other children. Intellectually limited children, however, develop competency skills at a slower rate. Adult supervision is often required in the planning and performance of appropriate

learning experiences for these children. The parents and special education teachers of retarded children know the importance of structuring the environment to stimulate and affect growth in all areas of development. Children can learn, however, to depend upon adult supervision and structure to the extent that they become inept in dealing with situations independently. Floor and Rosen (1975) have termed this phenomenon "learned helplessness": "Retarded persons living in protected environments learn helpless and dependent behaviors. Noticeably absent in observation of retarded persons in the community are instances of independent action and exploratory searching for solutions to problems" (Rosen, 1975, p. 373). Other research suggests that retarded children tend to passively avoid everyday situational problems, preferring to seek outside assistance and direction (Ross, 1969). This passive avoidance is frequently rewarded with increased adult attention, but unfortunately the attention generally takes the form of overprotection, "doing for the child," rather than an attempt to teach the student the skills needed for solving the problem or making the decision.

> Yet the ability to solve problems (and make decisions) could contribute to the psychological well being of the mentally retarded child by increasing his feeling of independence, level of activity and expectancy concerning his ability to successfully control his environment (Ross and Ross, 1973, p.20).

If the goals of special education programs include teaching handicapped students to become as independent as

possible and to fulfill their potential, no matter how limited, decision-making skills must be considered an important curricular component of such programs. "An initial step is to work first for self-direction, then for responsible choices, with personal and social competence as the goal" (Edmonson, 1974, p. 14). Without some provision for decision-making opportunities for handicapped students, true independence becomes an elusive goal.

THE BASIC PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

Although decision-making may not be addressed explicitly within special education curricula, it may well be a process that occurs naturally in the daily interactions and mutual exchanges between handicapped students and their teachers. For example, students may decide whether or not to attend to a particular lesson. In addition, choices may be made regarding leisure activities and partners for such activities. These decisions may or may not be sanctioned by the teacher.

The purpose of this study is to observe, describe, and analyze the types of decision-making opportunities special education teachers provide to their moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years. Teachers may provide such opportunities in a variety of ways -- through verbal directions, non-verbal communications (i.e. gestures), or in the organization of classroom activities and materials. The researcher recognizes the need for being

cognizant of any and all of the ways in which teachers communicate opportunities for decision-making to their students.

Shevin and Klein (1984) have identified the following five categories of decision-making opportunities which could potentially be offered to special education students:

1. Choices among activities;
2. Whether or not to engage in an activity;
3. When to terminate an activity;
4. Alternative means of accomplishing an objective; and
5. Choices of partners for activities (p. 164).

Although this list may not exhaust the potential opportunities for student decision-making, it does provide a general framework for observations made within this study. Before special educators can seriously consider how to incorporate decision-making opportunities into the special education curriculum, it is necessary to observe, describe, and analyze what actually occurs within classrooms. This research is a field study of three special education classrooms for moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years. By utilizing a passive participant observer procedure, the researcher hopes to gain new perspectives and insights regarding the opportunities teachers provide for special education students to make decisions and choices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the present study is to provide information regarding decision-making opportunities offered

to special education students within the classroom setting. More specifically, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms?
2. How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?
3. What are the students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them?
4. Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this present study? Can it be expanded to include other categories?

ASSUMPTIONS BASIC TO THE STUDY

The concept most basic to this study is that all human beings, regardless of intellectual capacity, have an innate right to affect decisions about their lives to the extent that their abilities allow them to do so. Further, it is the responsibility of special educators to encourage independence and decision-making in their students within the limits of each student's ability.

Other assumptions basic to this study include the following:

1. Decision-making is a complex process involving

many skills.

2. Appropriate decision-making opportunities can be provided to moderately intellectually limited students within the classroom program.
3. Teachers, by virtue of their position, have the power to provide opportunities for decision-making for their students. Such opportunities may be provided in a variety of ways -- through verbal directions, non-verbal communications (i.e. gestures), or in the organization of classroom activities and materials.
4. Describing what occurs in classrooms regarding student decision-making opportunities provides evidence for inferring which teacher behaviors enable students to make decisions and choices (Stevenson, 1973).

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The terms below are used frequently throughout this study. They are defined explicitly to provide uniformity and consistency of meaning to the readers of the text.

1. Decision-making: Decision-making is the process of choosing between or among alternatives (Stevenson, 1973). This term is also used interchangeably with "choice-making" (Shevin and Klein, 1984).
2. Moderately to Severely Intellectually Limited

Students: The students in this study have been diagnosed as "moderately to severely intellectually limited", otherwise known as "moderately to severely retarded." The intellectual functioning of these students tends to be approximately half the level of their chronological age, up to a 10-12 year level. They are generally capable of learning primary level academic skills and have been placed in educational programs to learn vocational skills useful in occupations such as custodial work, food preparation, wood working, arts and crafts and horticulture.

3. Competence: The term "competence" refers to an individual's ability to interact effectively with their total environment. It implies the ability to use information from the environment to solve problems and make decisions.
4. Special Education Curriculum: The special education curriculum referred to in this study is the formal, written course of study advocated by the school system for teacher use.
5. Field study: This terms refers to a study completed in a natural environment, as opposed to a laboratory setting. The "field" for this research is the classroom.
6. Ethnographic techniques: This term refers to the fieldwork methodology used in this research: participant observation in a natural environment with

minimal interference on the part of the researcher.

7. Passive participant observation: Passive participation allows the researcher to observe in an environment as a "spectator." There is limited interaction between the researcher and the people being studied.
8. Structured observation: Structured observation is an ethnographic technique which enables the researcher to focus observations and record data pertaining to a specified topic of interest.
9. Social validation: This term refers to a process the researcher uses to validate subjective observations and perceptions acquired from data analysis. This requires the researcher to discuss the analysis with the people being studied to determine their understanding and perception of the data.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This research project is a field study which utilized ethnographic techniques within an educational setting. Extensive observations within classrooms were required. The approach to the observations was quite focused: the researcher acted as a passive participant observer, primarily interested in observing and analyzing decision-making opportunities teachers offered to students within the daily activities of their classroom programs. The researcher used

Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making, recognizing that other categories could "emerge" as the observations were analyzed during the course of the study.

The researcher observed in three different classrooms within three special schools (occupational development centers). Students were 16-21 years of age with moderate to severe intellectual limitations. A total of one hundred five (105) students were observed in this study. The teachers of the three classrooms observed were tenured and considered at least "satisfactory" in their last yearly evaluation. There were three rounds of observations. Observations were completed during the months of October, November, and December. Total observation time was one hundred nine (109) hours and fifteen (15) minutes.

As previously stated, Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making was used as a framework for observing and recording the decision-making opportunities that teachers provided to their students. As the study progressed, in-depth analysis of observations provided the researcher with additional or alternative categories of decision-making.

The researcher socially validated the observations by discussing perceptions and analysis of the data with the teacher participants. This was done at the conclusion of November's observations. Adequate time was allowed for reflection and analysis of the data between and during the rounds of observation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The major limitation in a study such as this one stems from the limited number of teachers and students observed. It must be recognized that any generalization of these research findings to other classroom situations must be done with extreme caution. The purpose of this study is to gather and analyze ethnographic data in order to understand classroom interaction and to derive implications for future curriculum development within the field of special education. The observations should not be viewed as reflections of what occurs in every classroom situation.

The teacher participants of this study were informed of the research purposes and this may be another limitation of the study. Because the teachers were aware of the study's purpose, it is possible that teacher behavior may have been somewhat influenced. However, the researcher observed each teacher for an approximate total of thirty-five (35) to forty (40) hours. These extensive observation periods should have minimized the possibility that teachers changed their teaching style to reflect the concerns of the researcher. As a passive observer in the classroom, the researcher maintained a low profile (from both teachers and students) in order to observe as natural a classroom situation as possible.

Another limitation inherent in naturalistic research is the problem of researcher perception. The recording and analysis of classroom observations are dependent upon the

researcher's perception of the classroom situation at a given time. Every individual possesses a history of experiences and attitudes which have an impact on his or her perception of a situation. While the researcher recognizes this fact, there is no way to avoid it. As Lutz and Ramsey (1974) indicate, "It is not likely that anyone is totally free of concepts which predispose him to see certain things. If one is studying education, he will have had some degree of experience with that system. It is hard to believe that researchers go into the field without conceptual bias. We do not believe they would be better off even if they could do so" (p. 6). However, it is the researcher's responsibility to analyze the observational data from a variety of perspectives including a personal perspective as well as the teachers' perspective in order to provide a rich and full interpretation.

During the classroom observation phase of this study, the researcher attempted to adhere to a schedule of observation which had been made using random selection procedures. However, this was difficult to do for a variety of reasons. Teacher absences, student absences, and special school activities prohibited classroom observations at certain times. As a result, most classroom observation time was conducted during the morning hours (74 hours, 30 minutes) as opposed to afternoon hours (34 hours, 45 minutes). While this did not pose a significant problem to the overall results, it deserves mention as one possible limitation to

the study.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The intention of Chapter I was to provide an overview of the study: the nature of the study, its significance, basic purposes and procedures, general research questions, basic assumptions, definitions of terms, and limitations of the study.

Chapter II reviews the literature regarding the following topics which are related to this study: concepts of decision-making, decision-making and the regular education curriculum, and decision-making and the special education curriculum.

Chapter III is a presentation of the research model used in this study. Detailed procedures are also provided.

Chapter IV provides the results and analysis of the data. Chapter V is an extension of the data analysis including major conclusions of the study, implications for curriculum development, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This study is a field study which uses ethnographic techniques within educational settings. It is an attempt to observe, describe, and analyze the decision-making opportunities special education teachers provide for their moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years. The nature of this research requires that attention be given to selected literature in three major areas:

- Concepts of decision-making;
- Decision-making and the regular education curriculum; and
- Decision-making and the special education curriculum.

Concepts of decision-making includes a definition of the term "decision-making." Three conceptual frameworks for viewing the decision-making process are also presented. In addition, the sequence of steps in the decision-making process are discussed. This information is provided to enable the reader to understand how the term "decision-making" is used in this study.

Decision-making and the regular education curriculum provides a rationale for including decision-making in the

regular education curriculum, reviewing selected literature in this area of curriculum development. This section builds a theoretical and research base for understanding current philosophy regarding student participation in classroom decision-making.

Decision-making and the special education curriculum presents a rationale for including decision-making in the special education curriculum, and reviews the literature regarding decision-making with handicapped students and adults. An examination of reasons for the virtual neglect of student decision-making in the field of special education is also provided in this section.

Chapter II concludes by relating the purpose of the present study to the need for research in this area of curriculum development.

CONCEPTS OF DECISION-MAKING

This section of the review of the literature provides a conceptual framework regarding the use of the term "decision-making." "Decision-making" is defined, decision theory is briefly discussed, and a review of the sequence of steps in the decision-making process is provided.

"Decision-making" Defined

According to Cooper (1961), decision-making is an "art" which requires "... the definition of problems in relation to goals ... the analysis of facts which usually are incomplete

... the identification and valuation of alternatives ..." (p. xi). Fishburn (1972) believes that decision-making implies a commitment to certain actions or inactions -- "a deliberate act of selection, by the mind, of an alternative from a set of competing alternatives" (p.19). Berman and Roderick (1977) further elaborate that decision-making "is a mode of interacting with one's environment in which the individual assumes the responsibility as to whether he will act or be acted upon" (p.39).

Although the actual wording may vary somewhat from one author to another, at least one common element exists in all definitions of the term "decision-making": decision-making involves the process of choosing among or between alternatives. "Choosing thus becomes an act, in and of itself, and an indication of the ability to make a decision based upon prior experiences, present needs, and future goals" (Guess, Benson, and Siegel-Causey, 1985, p.81). It is this concept of the term "decision-making" that is used for purposes of this research study. The term is used synonymously with "choice-making."

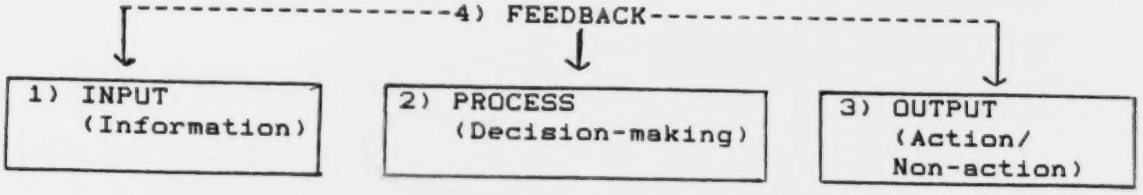
Individuals make decisions on a daily basis which need not be of lifelong consequence. Everyday, people choose what they wish to eat and wear, with whom they want to socialize, and in what types of activities they wish to participate. Decisions can be made to provide structure in one's life and to stimulate change. Regardless of the significance of the decision or choice, "...each choice we make is an expression

of our personal autonomy -- our freedom to define who we are and what we value. The opportunity to make choices provides us with power to determine, to a great extent, what happens to us on a moment-by-moment basis as well as over the span of our lives" (Guess, Benson and Siegel-Causey, 1985, p. 82). Opportunities to make decisions provides an individual with a freedom of purpose and control regarding one's own actions.

Conceptual Frameworks of Decision-making

Three different types of decision theory are identified by Lee (1971). Economic decision theory is concerned with choices that should be made to maximize the profit of businesses. Mathematical decision theory involves probability theory in relation to rational decision-making. The third type of decision theory, behavioral, stems from the discipline of psychology and is an attempt to explain human behavior. Behavioral decision theory is primarily concerned with ascertaining the choices a rational person would make in real life situations.

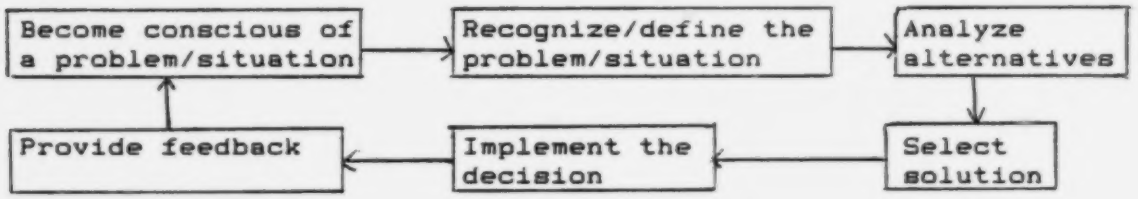
This study is primarily concerned with behavioral decision theory. Walker (1971) describes such a decision-making model in his use of the following diagram:



1. Information is the system's input.
2. The decision-making process is the process

component of the system.
3. Action or non-action is the output component of the system.
4. The feedback component includes the formal or informal routes through which the information progresses before the output.

Moody (1983) further explains behavioral decision theory through his demonstration of a "decision loop" (p.1):



This "decision loop" recognizes the need for individuals to make choices based upon their analysis of alternatives available to them.

The Decision-Making Process

Extensive literature exists regarding the sequence of steps an individual uses in making a decision (Janis and Mann, 1977; Arnold, 1978; Baird, 1978; Victory, 1979; Russell and Roberts, 1979; Smith, Hamrick, and Anspaugh, 1981; Hurst, Kinney, and Weiss, 1983). Janis and Mann (1977) trace five stages that decision makers go through in the process of arriving at a stable decision:

1. Appraising the challenge: When exposed to a threat or opportunity, the decision maker is challenged to action or inaction.
2. Surveying the alternatives: Having accepted the challenge of a decision, the decision maker focuses his/her attention on the possible alternatives.
3. Weighing alternatives: The decision maker then proceeds with a more thorough evaluation of the

possible alternatives.

4. Deliberating about commitment: The decision maker contemplates the decision he/she has made in order to provide reasonable support for that decision.
5. Adhering despite negative feedback: New threats and opportunities may alter the decision maker's confidence in the decision; the decision maker must therefore choose to change or adhere to the original decision.

Baird (1978) also identifies five steps in systematic decision-making as follows:

1. define the problem;
2. list the options or alternatives available;
3. define the criteria necessary to solve the problem;
4. analyze the options/alternatives; and
5. choose a course of action (pp. 9-11).

In 1981, Smith et al. outlined a practical approach for teaching decision-making, listing six steps in the process:

1. define the problem;
2. identify the possible solutions;
3. gather information;
4. make the decision;
5. try the decision; and
6. evaluate the consequences of the decision (pp. 637-640).

Smith et al. took the decision-making process one step further than Baird by adding an evaluation stage to the sequence of steps. Hurst, Kinney, and Weiss (1983) provide additional support for the decision-making process advocated by Smith et al. They too list six stages in the process:

1. problem awareness;
2. problem definition;
3. alternative solutions development;
4. alternative solutions evaluation;
5. decision implementation; and
6. decision evaluation.

Much of the literature regarding decision-making

processes involves attempts to describe systematically those processes, analyzing the various "steps" an individual uses in making a decision. However, some authors also suggest that individual choices and decisions are often made on an intuitive basis rather than a step-by-step procedure (Hurst et al., 1983). Steps in the decision-making process "may be followed in a rigid, self-conscious manner or they may be abbreviated so much that they are almost unconscious actions" (Pharis, Robison, and Walden, 1970, p.5). The decision-making process, then, is not always easily observable. Instead, it is a highly individualized process. Ojeman (1971) reaffirms the complexity of the decision-making process in the following quote:

> ... In the process the individual uses whatever ideas, skills, energy and similar psychological and physiological resources he has available for the task. When he makes a decision, he is trying to satisfy some desire or motivation, he will use whatever ideas, skills and attitudes he has acquired to fabricate a method for working out this motivation. In making a decision, he will tend to make the choice that he estimates or "feels" will help him reach his goal of satisfying the motivating force that stirs within him (p.262).

The importance of intuitive decision-making cannot be overlooked and yet, it is still helpful to conceptualize the decision-making process in a systematic and analytical manner. Although different authors may use different terms in describing the sequence of steps leading to effective decision-making, it is evident that the frameworks are similar and the overall sequence of steps remains consistent

throughout the literature.

Clearly, there are at least four distinct "phases" in the decision-making process. The first phase requires the individual to recognize and clearly define the problem or situation. The second phase calls for a generation of alternatives, options or solutions available to the individual for resolving the situation. Thirdly, after generating and analyzing the available alternatives, a decision or choice is made. The last phase demands that the individual analyze the decision for its effectiveness in solving the problem and the consequences it may have upon future situations or decisions. Decision-making requires an individual to recognize available alternatives before making a choice. If alternatives are unavailable or unclear to the individual, then the opportunity to make a choice does not exist. Choice-making means that the individual recognizes the possible alternatives and is able to select one of those alternatives as the "best" choice for that individual in a given situation. Siegal, Siegal, and Andrews (1964) share this view:

> One way to conceive of the ongoing flow of behavior is to think of it as representing a succession of choices in a series of decision situations. A choice is the behavior of a person who, when faced with a number of possible alternative courses of action, acts so as to carry out one of these courses (p.1).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this section supports the

idea that decision-making requires the selection of choices from two or more alternatives. Decision-making is an ongoing process which may be conceptualized to include four "phases" of thinking: recognizing and defining the problem or situation; generating possible solutions, options or alternatives; making the choice or decision and; analyzing the effectiveness of the choice or decision.

DECISION-MAKING AND THE REGULAR EDUCATION CURRICULUM

In recent years, authors in the field of curriculum theory, research and development have become increasingly concerned with issues related to the teaching of critical thinking skills. Generally, the concerns revolve around the notion that schools have a tendency to teach students rote memorization of facts, rather than how to use those facts for decision-making and problem solving. Vye and Bransford (1981), for example, argue that content is emphasized rather than process. They believe that schools teach students what to think, not how to think.

Other educators also have addressed this issue. In fact, within a nine-month period between the years 1984-1985, three issues of Educational Leadership were devoted to the topic of teaching thinking skills. The September, 1984 issue, entitled "Thinking Skills in the Curriculum", deals with the importance of incorporating critical thinking skills in the school curriculum. In this issue, Paul (1984) contends that critical thinking is fundamental to education

for a free society, stating that, "Without the ability to reason dialectically, students are intellectually, emotionally, and morally incomplete" (p. 4). Furthermore, Paul argues that critical thinking skills are essential to a "free, rational and autonomous mind" (p.5).

The other articles included in the September, 1984 issue of Educational Leadership provide an overview of various programs designed to teach critical thinking skills. One point that emerges from this overview is the belief that thinking skills must be incorporated throughout the entire instructional program provided by schools.

The two subsequent issues of Educational Leadership are devoted to helping teachers teach thinking skills within their classrooms: November, 1984 -- "When Teachers Tackle Thinking Skills" and May, 1985 -- "Direct Instruction and Teaching for Thinking". Articles contained within these issues offer practical guidelines to teachers for teaching critical thinking skills to their students. The suggestions provided include asking students questions in ways which will prompt thoughtful responses, encouraging students to reveal their points of view about educational issues and acknowledging their right to do so, providing opportunities for students to recognize and resolve discrepancies in problem-solving situations, using writing as a means to heighten and refine critical thinking skills, and encouraging students to think about their thinking skills or the mental processes they use to analyze issues. These articles also

stress that teacher education programs to help teachers create opportunities for and facilitate critical thinking among students are needed.

Falkoff and Moss (1984) emphasize the importance of teaching critical thinking during the early years of a student's educational career and developing a strong link between critical thinking and decision-making skills. The ultimate goal of education should be to teach students <u>how</u> to be critical thinkers thereby enabling them to be effective decision-makers and problem solvers. It is therefore necessary to provide students with opportunities to exercise their critical thinking and decision-making abilities within the confines of the school environment.

A rationale for providing decision-making opportunities to students is proposed by Berman (1968):

> We need to teach decision-making so the individual can live a more vital life. The individual who fails to see the range of choices available to him may live a routinized life within narrowly defined boundaries. The person who sees that the present may be a turning point between the past and the future may learn the beauty, symmetry, delight novelty, and potential good for one's self and others that can emerge from well designed decisions (p. 105).

Berman therefore takes the position that schools have a responsibility to give planned attention to the decision-making process, providing students with an awareness of the availability of choices and an acceptance of the consequences once decisions are made.

If students do not have opportunities to make decisions

and develop an awareness of the processes involved, they may reach adulthood without the skills necessary for making wise choices. Further, as Berman and Roderick (1977) point out: "The quality of one's living is contingent upon the manner in which one makes both the major and minor decisions of life" (p. 39).

A review of the literature regarding the topic of decision-making with non-handicapped students suggests a variety of benefits to those students. As early as 1973, Felixbrod and O'Leary demonstrated that higher student learning rates could result by allowing students to decide how many problems they would have to complete correctly before reinforcement was given. Twenty-four (24) second grade children participated in this study. They were divided in two groups: the experimental group was allowed to determine their own performance standards (deciding how many problems they would have to complete correctly); by contrast, performance standards were imposed on the control group of students. It was found that the experimental group demonstrated higher learning rates.

Geiger, Heine, Wall, and Snyder (1974) present research to indicate that providing decision-making opportunities to students may have a positive effect on student discipline. One hundred (100) students between the ages of 8-13 years were allowed to make decisions regarding a variety of mini-courses they wished to register for during the school year. By allowing these students a right to choose, more

responsibility was placed on the students for learning. It was hypothesized that student discipline was affected in a positive manner because "forced" schooling problems were somewhat alleviated. By allowing students some participation in choosing courses they preferred, students were not forced to participate in a totally prescribed school curriculum.

A study completed by Berk (1976) adds further support to the positive effects decision-making can have on student learning. Sixty-two (62) students in grades 2 through 5 were selected for participation in this study. Students in the experimental group were given a choice regarding their preference for group or individual instruction for learning sight vocabulary words. The control group was not given this choice. Higher learning rates were found for students who were allowed to choose the type of instruction they preferred.

Mancini et al. (1976) compared groups of students who were allowed to participate in routine classroom decision-making with those who were not given such opportunities. The results of this study indicate that students who were given decision-making opportunities in school demonstrated better interactions with teachers, showed more initiative, contributed more ideas to the classroom, and generally reflected more positive attitudes toward school. Similar research conducted by Martinek et al. (1977) showed that students who had opportunities to participate in classroom decision-making believed that they were accepted more by the

teacher. These same students also possessed more positive self-concepts.

Schempp and Cheffers (1982) provide further support for the positive effects of student decision-making. These researchers compared two hundred ninety-eight (298) elementary school children in physical education classes under three different teaching conditions. One group of students was allowed to participate in classroom decision-making, one group was provided with a traditional teaching approach (the teacher assumed full responsibility for classroom decision-making), and the last group was given no physical education instruction at all. After comparing all groups, the researchers conclude that encouraging children to participate in meaningful decision-making can increase student's positive attitudes toward human movement and enhance creative thinking and self-concept development.

Under the leadership of Louise Berman at the University of Maryland's Center for Young Children, a series of monographs regarding decision-making with pre-school aged children were published (Poultney, 1972; Horowitz, 1971; Roderick, Moyer, and Spodak, 1971). These studies address a variety of issues such as relationships among decision-making ability and other competencies, types of decisions made by pre-school children, and non-verbal behaviors related to decision-making. The results of these studies demonstrate that pre-school children are capable of making effective choices and decisions.

Hockstra (1979) also looked at the effects of providing choices of consequences to pre-school aged children. Eight (8) pre-school students were selected for purposes of this study. Two conditions are described: the first, the child-select condition, allowed students opportunities to choose their own activities after a given task was completed. The second condition, adult-select, dictated that the researcher select an activity for the student upon completion of the task. Each child was observed and tested under both conditions. It was found that when children were allowed to choose their own reinforcers (activities), higher rates of academic performance resulted.

The importance of providing decision-making opportunities early in a child's life is illustrated by Veach (1977) in the following quote:

> If children are allowed to make choices and accept responsibilities that are right for their developmental levels, the values inherent in wise choices and responsible behavior can be vividly manifested in their daily activities and reactions to others. Allowing children to make choices and accept the responsibility for those choices is one of the most important things adults can do in fostering children's growth and development (p. 25).

Berman also advocates the need for teaching beginning decision-making skills to young children, recognizing that the ground work for becoming a responsible adult decision-maker can be laid during the pre-school years of development:

> One place to start to emphasize choice and its meaning for life is in the education of young children. How shall a child a few years hence deal with tough moral and ethical questions if he has

> not become aware at a very early age that he has certain controls over what he selects to do and with whom he chooses to be? (Berman, in Horowitz, 1971, p. ii).

Massialas (1976) reiterates the idea that schools need to plan systematically for student decision-making opportunities, making such opportunities "legitimate school experiences". Berman (1978) also supports this idea and suggests that school planning should include opportunities for students to move:

- from nondecision to decision;
- from impulsive decisions to reflective decisions;
- from fear of risk-taking to taking more risks;
- from mundane decisions to creative decisions;
- from decisions requiring little searching for new ideas to decisions requiring much searching; and
- from decisions focusing basically on self to decisions incorporating self and others (p. 429).

Rowe (1983) discusses the need for schools to enhance adolescent responsibility in areas such as: maintaining a healthy body, obeying the laws and rules of society, controlling sexual behavior, performing of one's jobs and duties, and parenting. Rowe argues persuasively that, if schools are expected to teach students how to be responsible adults, then schools need to:

1) provide opportunities for students to make decisions and assume responsibility;
2) employ staff members who are positive models; and

3) utilize a curriculum designed to foster decision-making and responsibility in students.

Stewart (1983) also advocates the participation of students in classroom decision-making. Stewart views student decision-making as a strategy teachers can use to individualize instruction for their pupils. Every student has unique abilities, interests, and needs. In order to "tap" those unique qualities, teachers should allow students to make decisions in areas such as objectives, content, activities, materials, and evaluation devices. This will create opportunities for students to express their individuality in their classwork rather than forcing students to "fit a mold" prescribed by the teacher. Stewart believes that by providing student decision-making within the classroom, teachers can:

- further develop the social skills of their students;
- promote democratic action within the classroom;
- place more responsibility for learning on students; and
- promote independent thought and action by students.

According to Stewart, a major obstacle to providing opportunities for students' decision-making in classrooms is the attitudes of the teachers themselves. Many teachers have been taught to use a traditional teaching approach which requires them to assume all responsibility for classroom decision-making. While it may be difficult for teachers to

break away from this traditional approach, Stewart does offer some practical suggestions, stating that teachers must:

- be willing to let pupils share in decision-making;
- see themselves as a member of a group, not a final authority;
- be a helper-guide, not just a transmitter of facts;
- create a relaxed class atmosphere, allowing students to be themselves; and
- recognize the legitimacy and worth of all pupil responses (p. 282).

Summary

This section of the literature review has dealt with the topic of student decision-making and the regular education curriculum. It has been demonstrated that critical thinking skills are emphasized in curriculum literature, especially during recent years. The issue that is discussed consistently in the literature is that of teaching critical thinking skills in order to facilitate student decision-making and problem solving. A rationale for providing opportunities for student decision-making within the regular education curriculum has been presented. Research in this area has been reviewed, indicating a variety of potential benefits to students, not only in academic performance (i.e. higher learning rates) but also in social-emotional development (i.e. discipline and self-concept).

DECISION-MAKING AND THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

In tracing the development of special education programming, Ford, Mongon, and Whelan (1982) argue that a medical model approach to handicapping conditions dominated the philosophy of special education in the past. This approach lead to a belief that handicapped students are "deviant". They were generally ostracized by society and isolated in special schools for their educational training. The focus of attention was on the abnormalities exhibited by handicapped students. Educational programs for these students tended to emphasize the incapacities, inabilities and disabilities of the handicapped population (Tomlinson, 1982).

This medical model approach to the philosophy of special education has been gradually changing in recent years. Perhaps one reason for the change has been the influence of the normalization principle in the human services field. As defined by Nirje (1969), the normalization principle means "making available to the mentally retarded patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society" (p. 181). The normalization principle has lead to a new perspective regarding the handicapped population, one in which these individuals are viewed as being more normal than abnormal, possessing the same basic needs, wants and desires as their non-handicapped counterparts (McCord, 1982; McCord,

1983). Levy and Levy (1983) describe "normalization" as a process that respects the needs of people with disabilities, providing them with patterns of living and life conditions as close as possible to the norms of the community. The normalization principle implies that handicapped people are entitled to being treated with the same respect and dignity as non-handicapped people.

In the United States, the normalization principle had an impact at a national level with the enactment of Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act), passed by Congress in 1974. This legislation has helped to change the medical model approach to special education by emphasizing the identification of handicapped students' strengths (abilities) as well as their needs. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act also mandates that schools select "least restrictive placements" for special needs students within the educational system. "Least restrictive placement" is a term used to indicate that handicapped students are carefully reviewed to determine the intensity of special education services they require; the goal is to mainstream such students into regular education schools and classrooms whenever possible.

It is believed that mainstreaming and placing handicapped students in "least restrictive environments" can facilitate the normalization process (Thurman and Fiorelli, 1979; Biklen, 1981) by providing opportunities for handicapped students to interact with their non-handicapped

peers within a normal school environment. According to McCord (1983), one goal of the normalization process is to strengthen the bonds between handicapped people and their communities by providing opportunities for those people to be mainstreamed into society, not isolated as they have been in the past.

Another goal of normalization is to allow the handicapped population to enjoy the same basic rights and privileges afforded to non-handicapped people. Klein and Babcock (1979) advocate their position that retarded individuals should have the following opportunities:

- to strive for self actualization;
- to demonstrate own potential for independence
- to have own needs be as important as those of a nonretarded individual;
- to use own judgement in determining own needs;
- to refuse requests without feeling guilty;
- to learn to feel and express anger;
- to feel and express a healthy competitiveness;
- to make mistakes;
- to be treated as a capable adult and not be patronized;
- to learn to exercise rights in work and in social situations; and
- to have the opportunity to make choices about work and residential placements (pp. 232-233).

Many of these goals suggested by Klein and Babcock deal directly with issues of decision-making and self-reliance (i.e. demonstrating potential for independence, using own judgement to determine one's needs, making mistakes, being treated as a capable person, and having opportunities to make choices). Shevin and Klein (1984) believe that goals such as the ones described above are "important to the quality of

life of individuals who are retarded if they are to reap the benefits of normalized services. Schools must take responsibility for teaching such skills directly and explicitly" (p. 159).

Recently, Williams, Vogelsburg, and Schutz (1985) have identified the following three major goals for the education of secondary-aged severely handicapped students:

> 1) to prevent institutionalization;
> 2) to prepare for work and independent living; and
> 3) to integrate into the community by placing in least restrictive post school environments (p. 101).

All of these goals can be facilitated by enhancing the independence of special education students, i.e. helping them to become as self-reliant as possible. Independence also implies the right of an individual to make choices or decisions. In the course of a day, an individual may make many decisions. Some may become routine, such as food or clothing preferences; others may be far-reaching in their impact upon an individual's life, such as housing or occupational decisions. Regardless of the significance of the choice or decision, individuals can experience a certain amount of autonomy and dignity when given opportunities to make decisions for themselves.

Researchers have conducted few studies in the area of decision-making with intellectually limited students. It appears to be a relatively new area of interest in the field of curriculum development for special education.

In an early study, Goode and Gaddy (1976) describe an

observational technique they were able to use successfully in ascertaining choices or preferences with alingual, deaf-blind, and retarded clients on a state hospital ward. The data from this study were based on hundreds of hours of observation over a twenty month period. The subject population consisted of a total of 16 male and female deaf-blind residents between the ages of 4 and 24 years. All subjects were considered low functioning by the hospital staff and required assistance in almost all self-help skills. By using a five category preference/dispreference scale (ranging from highly preferred to highly dispreferred), these researchers were able to rate a client's preference for daily activities based upon that client's behavior during those activities. The scale is described below:

1. Highly preferred-behavior which the resident actively pursues and/or during which he exhibits strong signs of positive affect (excitement, laughter, etc).
2. Preferred-behaviors during which the resident is cooperative (though he does not actively pursue) and during which he shows positive affect.
3. Neutral-behaviors during which the resident seldom displays affect (i.e., is passive or disinterested).
4. Dispreferred-behaviors which the resident tolerates or is somewhat physically resistive and during which he exhibits negative affect (whimpering, whining, crying, etc.).
5. Highly dispreferred-behaviors which the resident actively avoids or resists and during which he shows strong negative affect (tantrum behavior or rage) (p. 11).

Data gathered on each resident provided valuable information to the hospital staff for understanding the resident's choices and preferences for daily activities. An actual

example of a preferred/dispreferred list for a 9 year old female included the following:

1. Highly preferred - listening to music, swimming, eating sweets.
2. Preferred - bathing, rocking, sitting on a staff member's lap.
3. Neutral - classroom activities.
4. Dispreferred - being forced to eat hard foods, having hair or teeth brushed.
5. Highly dispreferred - being taken from a highly preferred activity, having temperature taken, being yelled at by a staff member (p.11).

This study is a significant one because it was one of the first to discuss the importance of recognizing the ability of the retarded to make choices for themselves.

Grigsby and Harshman (1977) compared two groups of moderately retarded youngsters on achievement levels. Each group consisted of nine students with an average age of 14.6 years. Students were matched on variables such as age, sex and intelligence quotient (IQ). The control group was given a "traditional" teaching approach in which the teacher assumed full responsibility for planning and implementing all classroom activities. In comparison, the experimental group was provided with opportunities to participate in classroom decision-making. It was found that the experimental group demonstrated higher achievement levels in areas such as spatial perception, communication, welfare, health and rules. The results therefore suggest that one benefit of allowing student decision-making may be in the area of achievement. These results are similar to the findings of studies done with normal subjects.

Ross and Ross (1978) also compared two groups of retarded students who had been diagnosed as mildly intellectually limited. Each group consisted of 28 children, approximately 6 years of age, who were matched on variables such as chronological age, mental age, and IQ. The experimental group participated in a structured training program designed to teach students how to choose the best alternative in problem solving situations. The control group did not participate in the training program. Results of this study indicate that the group which participated in the training program produced higher posttest scores in problem solving. Not surprisingly, the authors of this study strongly encourage the direct teaching of problem solving and decision-making skills to retarded students.

Heller (1978) studied the effects of group discussion on the subsequent individual decisions made by mentally retarded residents in a group home. It was found that small group discussions of situations requiring decision-making aided individual residents in their ability to make decisions for themselves later. It was hypothesized that the group discussions provided the residents with opportunities to exchange ideas and gather new information that might influence decisions later made by those residents.

In 1981, Breuning, Davis, and Lewis, working with seventy-eight (78) institutionalized retarded adults, demonstrated the importance of allowing these adults to choose their own activities. Observers recorded the "on

task" behavior of the residents in four experimental conditions:

1. staff and resident input into selection of activities;
2. resident input only;
3. staff input only; and
4. neither staff nor resident input.

The results of this study indicated that, when given opportunities to make their own choices, the residents became significantly involved in goal-directed activities during the day. On days when they were not permitted to make choices, the residents were likely to remain idle.

As indicated previously, research in the area of decision-making with retarded students has been extremely limited. Although the available literature does suggest the potential benefits to intellectually limited students of opportunities to make choices and decisions, decision-making does not appear to be an important component of the special education curriculum. Several authors suggest reasons why this topic has been virtually neglected.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, special education has been dominated in the past by a deviancy model approach to handicapping conditions (Ford, Mongon, and Whelan, 1982; Guess, Benson, and Siegel-Causey, 1985). This approach is oriented toward identifying weaknesses or deficits which require remediation in the handicapped population. Instruction tends to be highly structured in order to "fix"

perceived deviant behavior. Because this has been the primary focus of special education, there is little opportunity for handicapped students to make choices or decisions for themselves. Instead, educators prescribe what is to be taught (based upon student weaknesses of deficits) and how it shall be taught. It is a highly controlled and structured process (Guess and Siegel-Causey, 1985).

In addition, a strong behavioral orientation toward teaching predominates in the field of special education. Human behavior is meticulously analyzed and reflected in the specific goals and instructional objectives upon which the special education curriculum is based. While this behavioral approach has indeed produced results for handicapped students, Guess and Siegel-Causey (1985) question the long term effects: "Does the prevalent behaviorally-based technology used with severely handicapped persons adversely affect the emergence of those human qualities that we are striving so hard to develop in them?" (p. 232). The suggestion here is that a curriculum based upon behavioral objectives may ignore the affective domain of human development which includes learning to express one's likes and dislikes.

Another consequence of the deviancy model is the tendency of special educators and families of handicapped persons to focus on the abnormalities of the handicapped person, rather than viewing them as more normal than abnormal. Because the handicapped person is not able to

perform certain tasks, educators and families may have a tendency to over-protect their handicapped youngsters. Handicapped individuals are often seen as being unable (or even incapable) of making choices or decisions due to their handicapping condition. There is also a fear that if a handicapped person is given a choice, he or she may choose the "wrong" alternative and have to suffer the consequences of a poorly made decision. Teachers and families seldom recognize the right of the handicapped to make mistakes and learn from the consequences of those mistakes.

As a result, handicapped youngsters learn early in life to become dependent upon adults. Turnure and Zigler (1964) found that retarded children demonstrate more "outer directedness" in problem solving situations than normal children. Retarded children often glanced at an adult experimenter and looked for cues from the experimenter regarding how problems should be solved. Normal children tended to trust their own abilities to solve problems and therefore did not glance at the adult experimenter as much as the retarded children. It was hypothesized that retarded children, because of their repeated experiences with failure in problem-solving situations, felt a need to look to others for help. The "outer-directedness" of retarded students observed in this study closely parallels research regarding the concept of "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1975).

"Learned helplessness" is thought to result from a belief that one has little or no control over one's life.

Characteristically, persons who experience helplessness see no relationship between their actions and outcomes, have a limited view of their ability to change their circumstances, and are frequently passive and negative (Hooker, 1976). Floor and Rosen (1975) showed that retarded adults demonstrate significantly more signs of helplessness than nonretarded adults in a variety of problem solving situations which were designed to assess differences in characteristics such as passivity-dependency, coping behavior, and locus of control. In an effort to explain this phenomenon of helplessness in the retarded population, the authors state that: "Day students often have extremely over-protective families and lead quite sheltered lives. Thus, decision-making and the experience of initiating action may be denied to this population ..." (p. 572).

Although the literature review regarding student decision-making in the special education curriculum demonstrates a paucity of available research, there is evidence to suggest that this topic may be gaining more attention from special educators in recent years (Shevin and Klein, 1984; Guess and Siegel-Causey, 1985; Guess, Benson and Siegel-Causey, 1985). As early as 1972, Wolfensberger, in his discussions of the normalization process, advocated his belief that retarded adults should be able to make decisions about their own leisure activities, vacations, living conditions, education, and work (pp. 189-192). More recently, Shevin and Klein (1984) have extended

Wolfensberger's ideas to include severely disabled students within school settings. They believe that three contexts exist for fostering choice-making skills with retarded students:

> 1) classroom activities designed to teach specific choice-making skills;
> 2) integration of choice-making opportunities throughout the student's day, across curricular domains; and
> 3) provision of opportunities, both inside and outside of school, for students to experience the benefits and consequences of choices they have made (p. 162).

In an effort to provide practical suggestions to special education teachers for fostering decision-making or choice-making in their students, Shevin and Klein also identify five areas where choices can potentially be offered to handicapped students. These are:

1. Choices among activities: These choices include the selection from among two or more valid options. In other words, the child is presented with a choice which will be accepted and valued by the teacher regardless of which alternative is selected.
2. Whether or not to engage in an activity: The child is asked, "Do you want to _____?", and an answer of "No" by the child will be accepted by the teacher.
3. When to terminate an activity: The child is asked, "Shall we do that again?", and an answer of "No" will be accepted by the teacher. Alternatively, the child may indicate to the teacher during an activity, "Let's do something else," and the activity is terminated. Also, when the teacher says, "Let's do something else, "and the child says "No" or continues the current activity, the teacher accepts the child's choice.
4. Alternative means of accomplishing an objective: The child is presented with a task, and a model of how that task is to be done.

The teacher accepts completion of the task, regardless of whether the steps followed in its completion were identical to those in the model.

5. Choice of partners for activities: At the outset of a task, a student may be asked, "Should we ask somebody to do this with us? Who would you like to ask?" If the student indicates he or she would like to do the task with another person in the class, then that person may be invited to join the teacher and the student in that activity (p.164).

Shevin and Klein recognize that this list of potential decision-making opportunities may not be comprehensive, but that it can provide a basis for teachers to begin focusing their attention toward providing such opportunities to their handicapped students.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a review of the literature in three areas relevant to this study: concepts of decision-making, decision-making and the regular education curriculum, and decision-making and the special education curriculum.

Allowing students, both normal and handicapped, to make decisions within classrooms can provide a variety of benefits to those students. It is clear, however, that the topic of student decision-making has not been extensively addressed within the field of special education. More research needs to be completed in this area to determine the types of decision-making opportunities that can be offered to intellectually limited students and to ascertain how these opportunities can be incorporated within the special

education curriculum. It is anticipated that the present study will yield data that will provide information regarding the types of decision-making opportunities currently being offered to moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16 - 21 years, within special education classrooms.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this research study was to observe, describe, and analyze the types of decision-making opportunities provided to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years within special education classrooms. Observational data allowed the researcher to address the following research questions:

1. What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms?
2. How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?
3. What are the students' immediate responses to the opportunities provided to them?
4. Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this present study? Can it be expanded to include other categories?

Methodology refers to the process, principles, and procedures used to approach research issues. This chapter discusses the methodology used by the researcher to accomplish the stated intentions of this study.

The present study required a qualitative methodological approach in order to address the purposes of the research.

It is a field study which utilized ethnographic techniques within an educational setting. The researcher did not begin with stated hypotheses and no attempt was made to observe human behavior for purposes other than description and comparison. Instead, this research was concerned primarily with identifying and analyzing aspects of student decision-making within special education classrooms. It was a search for understanding, not causality.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD WORK TECHNIQUES

Ethnography refers to a process of observing human beings in their natural environment with minimal outside interference from the researcher. There are no pre-defined hypotheses and the researcher avoids manipulating the setting in any way. The researcher is primarily concerned with observing and describing what occurs in the natural situation. The ultimate goal of ethnographic research is the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. There is no attempt to "prove" or disprove hypotheses. Instead, it is an attempt to search for patterns and their meanings in order to identify and understand the underlying assumptions and values of the social unit being studied (Dobbert, 1982).

The credibility of ethnographic fieldwork methodology lies in its ability to describe the culture and further extend the base of knowledge about that culture (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). In justifying the use of ethnographic fieldwork methods in education, Spradley (1980) suggests

that: "Ethnography is a tool with great promise: It offers the educator a way of seeing schools through the eyes of students..." (p. vii).

Exploratory fieldwork studies lead to the development of hypotheses and insights:

> The development of hypotheses is the special province of the anthropological field method. As such one does not begin with hypotheses in a field study but rather with tentative assumptions about the phenomenon being studied...As data are gathered these assumptions are refined, conditions of verification and exceptions are noted, checked, researched and the statements refined to correspond with the empirical fact (Lutz and Ramsey, 1974, p.5).

Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook (1959) discuss several features of an ethnographic approach to research which are particularly beneficial to the formulation of insights. One major feature is the attitude of the investigator. The investigator must be alert and receptive to the process of understanding. Ideas and assumptions are constantly being reformulated as observational data are obtained. A second feature is the intensity demanded by extensive observations in the field. It is this intensive observation that provides the researcher with data to analyze. The third characteristic of an ethnographic approach is its dependence on the integrative powers of the researcher. The researcher uses observational data to describe, explain, and justify the final analysis of the situation. The researcher must therefore be able to synthesize many diverse pieces of information in order to

formulate a unified interpretation (p.60).

> The field researcher views the substance or reality of his field in creative, emergent terms: it is neither fixed nor finite, nor independent of human conception and subsequent redefinition; therefore, it is not "all there", needing only to be located, measured and then rendered as "findings". He assumes reality to be infinitely complex-certainly more complex than any current rendering of it--and that he as an observer holds the key to an infinitely varied relation with the objects of his inquiry. Therefore, the researcher's developed understanding of his object is not necessarily or merely "true" or "untrue"; rather it is to be evaluated according to its usefulness in furthering ideas about this class of objects and according to whether the understanding is grounded in data (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, p.7).

Research which utilizes ethnographic techniques can be viewed along two continuums. The first is related to the social units studied: "macro-ethnography" refers to the study of complex societies. This generally requires many years of research and usually involves numerous investigators. "Micro-ethnography", on the other hand, refers to the study of much smaller units such as a single social situation. The second continuum is related to the scope of the investigator. A comprehensive ethnographic study seeks to analyze and understand a total way of life -- the researcher attempts to document a wide range of customs covering an entire community. In comparison, topic-oriented ethnography allows a researcher to narrow the focus of investigation to a specific topic or problem (Spradley, 1980, pp. 30-31).

Both approaches to ethnographic research can be highly valuable in providing knowledge and understanding of the

environment studied. The approach a researcher chooses is dependent upon the purposes and intentions of the study. The present study is an example of a topic-oriented approach to field research.

Regarding the use of an ethnographic approach to research in schools, Wolcott (1975) discusses four issues which should be addressed prior to the investigation:

1) Appropriateness of the problem - Is the problem one which is best addressed through the use of ethnographic techniques? Wolcott definitely advocates the exploratory use of ethnography where the problem is not necessarily explicitly defined (p. 113).

2) Appropriateness of the ethnographer - Since the ethnographer is the main instrument of the research, a sensitive and perceptive approach must be used to facilitate analysis and interpretation of the data.

3) Appropriateness of the research climate - How easily is the researcher accepted into the field and has adequate time been allowed for observation and analysis?

4) Appropriateness of expectations for the completed study - Wolcott discusses a variety of ethnographic techniques for gathering information and urges ethnographic researchers to match those techniques to their expectations for the completed study.

Wolcott encourages every educational researcher choosing to use ethnographic techniques to address these four issues before investing the vast amount of time and energy required by a field study. In regard to the present study, the research questions proposed are of an exploratory nature since there is very little information about student decision-making processes within special education classrooms. Passive participant observation has been selected as

the technique for gathering data and the researcher has allowed sufficient time for reflection and analysis.

Participant Observation

Several methods of data collection are available to the researcher utilizing ethnographic techniques: participant observation, personal documents, and unstructured interviewing. This present study uses one type of participant observation as the primary source of data. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), participant observation is "characterized by a period of social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter. During this period, data are unobtrusively and systematically collected" (p.5).

What is the difference between being an ordinary participant in a social situation and taking on the role of a participant observer? Spradley (1980) outlines at least six differences. First, the participant observer comes to a social situation with a dual purpose: 1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and 2) to observe the people, activities, setting and dynamics of the situation. The ordinary participant comes to the same situation with only one purpose -- to engage in the appropriate activities. The participant observer must also be explicitly aware of as many things occurring in the environment as possible. The ordinary participant, on the other hand, can selectively attend to only those things which are relevant to him or her at any given time. In addition to being explicitly aware of

the environment, the participant observer must also use a wide-angle lens while making their observations to allow them to take in a much broader perspective of information than an ordinary participant would be expected to do.

As a participant observer, the researcher will also feel an insider/outsider experience: in some situations, he/she must be able to participate to some extent in the activities, thus allowing him/her to be an "insider" for brief periods. In most cases, however, the researcher will feel like an "outsider," observing the activities and experiences of the subjects being studied. The participant observer must also allow time for introspection -- to look within their own personal perspective to assess their feelings, thoughts and ideas regarding their observations. Introspection is imperative to data analysis and interpretation. In contrast, most ordinary participants do not engage in a large amount of introspection regarding their daily activities, unless an unexpected or critical event occurs. Finally, unlike an ordinary participant, the participant observer is involved in record keeping (pp. 54-58). Record keeping must be accurate and up-to-date -- the credibility of the researcher's analysis and interpretation lies in the ability of the researcher to use the observational data to explain and justify any conclusions that are drawn.

Participant observers vary in the degree of their involvement with the research situation. Spradley (1980) identifies five levels of involvement or participation:

1) Non-participation - allows a researcher to collect data with no involvement at all with the people and situations being studied. For example, a researcher may watch a variety of children's cartoons on television to determine the hidden meanings of such programs.

2) Passive participation - allows the researcher to be present in the environment but with limited interaction with the people being studied. The passive participant acts as a "bystander" or "spectator".

3) Moderate participation - occurs when the observer chooses to maintain a balance between the roles of "insider" and "outsider".

4) Active participation - requires the researcher to become involved in some activities of the situation in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural rules or norms for behavior.

5) Complete participation - provides the researcher with opportunities to become totally involved in all aspects of the research situation (pp. 58-62).

The type of participation a researcher selects is dependent upon the purposes of the study. However, Bodgan (1972) suggests:

> Control your participation; keep in mind that your primary concern is collecting data. The amount and nature of participation should be such that the researcher fits comfortably into the setting and is able to establish the kind of rapport he wishes without disturbing the setting or having his participation interfere with his function as an observer (p.28).

The present study demands the use of passive participation -- the researcher must be somewhat isolated within the classroom in order to make appropriate observations and maintain accurate records regarding the behavior of teachers and students.

Just as researchers vary in their level of involvement with the research situation, they also differ in the type of observations they choose to make. Unstructured observations are primarily used in studies of an exploratory nature. The researcher may begin a study with a broadly defined topic and, through unstructured observations, the topic may gradually become more focused and refined. In comparison, structured observations are used primarily when the researcher begins the study with a relatively specific topic of interest (Sellitz et al., 1959). In structured observations, "the investigator knows what aspects of the group activity are relevant for his research purposes and is therefore in a position to develop a specific plan for the making and recording of observations before he begins collecting data" (p.221). Once again, the researcher must assume the responsibility for choosing the appropriate type of observations (structured vs. unstructured) in accordance with the purposes of the study. For purposes of this study, the researcher chose to use structured observations since the research topic was highly focused and specified.

Summary Statement

In summary, this research study is a field study which used ethnographic techniques within an educational setting. The purpose of the study was to observe, describe and analyze the activities and dynamics of the classroom situation with minimal outside interference from the researcher. It was an attempt to understand and interpret

student and teacher behavior in regard to decision-making opportunities. The ultimate goal of this study was to use the observational data gathered to provide insight into the opportunities teachers give moderately to severely intellectually limited students to make decisions for themselves within the natural classroom setting.

This study was conducted as a topic-oriented field study. As such, the research was limited to three classroom situations within three schools. Observations were made only in regard to the decision-making opportunities teachers provide to students within those three classrooms. The researcher acted primarily as a passive participant observer or "spectator" in the classroom. Because the research was highly specified, concerned only with the topic of student decision-making opportunities provided by teachers, data were collected through structured observations.

ETHICAL ISSUES

There are several ethical issues that must be addressed when conducting a field study. The first issue relates to the protection of those studied. Anonymity for the organization and the participants studied must be strictly maintained throughout all facets of the research. In this particular study, only three people knew the identity of the organization studied: the researcher, the chief advisor for the research, and the organization's director of research. The primary interest of the researcher was to provide further

knowledge, not to damage the reputation of the participants or the organization studied. As Lutz and Ramsey (1974) so aptly state: "...our interest is to describe the organizational system so as to provide insights and generalizations. Our concern is to avoid injury to any person" (p.8). Rainwater and Pittman (1967) reiterate the need for the researcher to provide anonymity for the participants and the organization and encourage researchers to code all information gathered from observations.

The second ethical issue that must be addressed in this research involves the specificity of the information the researcher provides to the participants prior to the observations. For purposes of this study, teachers and administrators of the schools involved were provided with a description of the overall intentions of the research (Please refer to Appendix A: Research Proposal for Teachers and Administrators).

The most important goal of fieldwork is to provide further knowledge to society: "To explain factually and truthfully the conceptual nature of a social-cultural system so as to provide the basis of an improved society is the most moral act a behavioral scientist can perform" (Lutz and Ramsey, 1974, p.8). This leads to the third issue -- reciprocity of information. The researcher uses the information he or she acquires from the participants of the study to further his or her understanding of a particular topic of interest. In exchange for that information, the

researcher is obligated to pass on the research findings to those participants and the organization involved. According to May (1980), "A convenental ethics is responsive and reciprocal in character. It acknowledges a two-way process of giving and receiving" (p.367). The participants as well as the investigator should reap the benefits of the research. For purposes of this study, a discussion of the findings was scheduled with the teachers and administrators to inform them of the results and conclusions of the research.

PROCEDURES

Research Sites

Three (3) research sites within a local education agency were selected for purposes of this study. The local education agency facilitated access to these research sites for the researcher. These sites are the annex buildings for three special schools within the county. They are considered the occupational development centers for the county's intellectually limited and physically handicapped population. These sites were selected because they have the appropriate student population (moderately to severely intellectually limited, ages 16-21 years) needed for this study. One (1) classroom per site (yielding a total of three classrooms) was observed.

Teacher Participants

The three teachers who participated in this study were selected based on the following criteria:

- special education certification;
- tenured;
- a rating of at least "satisfactory" in their last yearly evaluation;
- teaching a class designated as a "work training" program;
- teaching a class of students at the appropriate age level (16-21 years) and functioning level (moderately to severely intellectually limited) for purposes of this study; and
- willingness to have the researcher observe in their classrooms.

The teacher participants were informed of the research purposes of this study (Please refer to Appendix A: Research Proposal for Teachers/Administrators) prior to their participation.

Student Participants

A total of one hundred five (105) students participated in this study. The students in the classes observed were diagnosed as moderately to severely intellectually limited, according to standardized intelligence tests. Their ages varied from 16 to 21 years. Table I (See p. 62) presents more detailed information about the students in regard to research site, sex, and functioning level. Functioning level (high, middle, low) was determined by each student's teacher. The participating teachers rated students based on the level of independence demonstrated by each student within the classroom. The more independent students were rated as high functioning while the less independent students were rated as low to middle functioning.

Classroom Observations

Three distinct "rounds" of classroom observations were

TABLE I

NUMBERS OF STUDENTS BY SEX AND FUNCTIONING LEVEL

	Research Site 1 (Homemaking)	Research Site 2 (Office Skills)	Research Site 3 (Custodial/Grounds Maintenance)	Combined Sites
	N	N	N	N
Males	23	20	19	62
High	2	8	4	14
Middle	6	5	6	17
Low	15	7	9	31
Females	9	15	19	43
High	1	5	6	12
Middle	3	4	5	12
Low	5	6	8	19
Totals	32	35	38	105

scheduled: one round in October, one in November and the final round in December (Please refer to Appendix B: Classroom Observation Schedule). Total observation time for all rounds was one hundred nine (109) hours and fifteen (15) minutes (See Table II, p. 64).

Classrooms were scheduled for observation using a random selection procedure. This procedure helped to provide an adequate representation of each classroom situation. According to Budd and Thorp (1963)

> There is, of course, a very good reason for attempting to distribute the sample over the entire time period under study... When studying a period such as one, two or three months, one should attempt to compensate by seeking a distribution that will, in the long run, represent the time period equitably (p.7).

Data Collection Methods

Because the research topic of this study was quite focused, it was possible to use structured observations during the course of this study. The researcher's primary interest was in observing, recording, and analyzing the opportunities teachers provide for student decision-making within the classroom. Decision-making is defined as the process of choosing between or among alternatives (Stevenson, 1973). The term "decision-making" is used interchangeably with the term "choice-making" (Shevin and Klein, 1984). Shevin and Klein have developed a category system of choice-making opportunities to include: choices among activities, whether or not to engage in an activity, when to terminate an activity, alternative means of accomplishing an objective,

TABLE II

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TIME

Research Site	Round of Observation			
	Round 1 (October)	Round 2 (November)	Round 3 (December)	Combined Rounds
Research Site 1 (Homemaking)	9 hours, 30 minutes	14 hours	14 hours	37 hours, 30 minutes
Research Site 2 (Office Skills)	5 hours, 45 minutes	14 hours, 30 minutes	14 hours, 30 minutes	34 hours, 45 minutes
Research Site 3 (Custodial Skills/ Grounds Maintenance)	8 hours	14 hours, 30 minutes	14 hours, 30 minutes	37 hours
Combined Sites	23 hours, 15 minutes	43 hours	43 hours	109 hours, 15 minutes

and choice of partners for activities (p.164). This category system was used to provide the overall structure for the classroom observations and analysis. Another category, "miscellaneous," was added to include those choice-making opportunities that did not appear appropriate for placement in the other categories.

Observational data were recorded on log sheets (Please refer to Appendix C: Sample Log Sheet). As indicated on the sample log sheet, the date of each observation day was recorded. The research site was also recorded using a code system. The other categories on the log sheet are discussed below:

Time: The time of the observations was recorded as observations were made.

Context: This category was used to describe the classroom environment or events which may have had an effect on observed interactions.

Activity: This category allowed the researcher to record the various activities in which the class was engaged.

Decision/Choice Opportunities: This category was used to record the decision-making or choice-making opportunities teachers provided for their students. As previously stated, Shevin and Klein's category system was utilized as a framework for recording these observations.

Students' Immediate Response: The researcher's primary focus was on teacher behavior. However, this category

also permitted the researcher to record the immediate responses of those students who were given decision-making opportunities during the observation periods.

Researcher's Comments: This category was used to record thoughts, feelings, insights, or perceptions the researcher had while observing.

In addition, the total amount of time spent in observing per day was recorded on the log sheet.

Social Validation Procedures

Wolf (1978) presents an argument for the social validation of subjective data or judgments: "It seems to us that by giving the same status to social validity that we now give to objective measurement and its reliability we will bring the consumer, that is society, into our science, soften our image, and make more sure our pursuit of social relevance" (p.207). Social validation, then, requires the researcher to "test" the validity of data by checking the perceptions of those individuals being studied.

For purposes of this study, the researcher used social validation procedures with the teacher participants. Upon completion of the second round of observations, the preliminary data analysis was discussed with the teacher participants. In this way, teachers were given the opportunity to provide the researcher with information and insights that may have been relevant to the purposes of this study.

The researcher provided each teacher with examples of decision-making opportunities taken from their own classrooms. Teachers were asked to describe their purposes in providing the choices for their students. This information was used to assist the researcher in appropriately categorizing the decision-making opportunities observed. The participating teachers were especially helpful to the researcher in labeling the various sub-categories within category 6 (miscellaneous).

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the classroom observations were analyzed in relation to the research questions:

What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms?

Structured observations provided the researcher with information regarding the opportunities teachers gave their students to make decisions within the daily classroom situation. Data analysis yielded descriptive data such as frequency of student decision-making opportunities, percentages of opportunities within each choice-making category, and the types of contexts and activities which appeared to be most and least conducive to providing opportunities for student decision-making.

How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?

Because three different classroom situations were observed, student decision-making opportunities within those

classrooms could be compared. By comparing the records of the observations, the researcher could analyze the similarities and/or differences which became evident.

What are the students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them?

As decision-making opportunities were observed, the researcher also recorded students' immediate responses to those opportunities. This yielded information concerning how the students respond: Were the students able to use the opportunities given them or were they unable to make choices or decisions even when given the opportunity to do so?

Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this present study? Can it be expanded to include other categories?

As previously stated, Shevin and Kleins' category system of choice-making was used as a framework for the classroom observations. The researcher, however, recognized that other categories could "emerge" from the data as observations were made and analyzed.

Summary of Procedures

The following is a summary of the procedures used in this study:

1. Research sites were selected in cooperation with the local education agency.
2. Administrators of the research sites were contacted to review the purposes of the research study and to discuss the selection of teacher participants.
3. Purposes of the study were discussed with the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study.

4. Round 1 of observations was completed in October.
5. Data were analyzed from the first round of observations.
6. Round 2 of observations was completed in November.
7. Data were analyzed from the second round of observations.
8. The analysis of data from the second round was socially validated with the teacher participants.
9. Round 3 of observations was completed in December.
10. Data were analyzed from the third round of observations.
11. All data from each round of observations were analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results of this study and provides an interpretation of those results. Prior to the discussion of the data, the context of each of the three research settings is described in detail to give the reader an understanding of the schools, classrooms, teachers and students involved in this research. In addition, classroom observation time is detailed and several considerations regarding the nature of the decision-making opportunities observed are discussed.

The Results and Interpretation section of this chapter provides an analysis of the data in relation to the following topics:

- number and rate of decision-making opportunities observed;
- category system of decision-making opportunities;
- students' immediate responses to decision-making opportunities;
- the dimension of time (morning vs. afternoon) in relation to decision-making opportunities observed;
- sex and functioning level of students in relation to decision-making opportunities observed; and
- group vs. individual decision-making opportunities.

Chapter IV concludes with a summary of the results and interpretation of this study.

CONTEXT

This study involved three classrooms in three special schools within one local education agency. These schools and classes were selected because they provided educational and work training programs for the population under study: moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years. Although all of these special schools served the needs of similar student populations, each school and classroom also provided a unique context to this study.

Research Site 1

Research site 1 is in a special school located in an area which is highly industrialized, and most of the 80-100 students who attend this school come from lower and middle class families. Students range in age from 16 to 21 years and have been diagnosed as moderately to profoundly intellectually limited. There is one "self-contained" class comprised of the most severely to profoundly retarded students. The moderately to severely retarded students are grouped heterogeneously. The students change classes throughout the day and receive instruction in the following curriculum areas: reading, math, office skills, horticulture, shop, and homemaking. In addition, art, music, library, and physical education classes are provided once a week. The school year is divided into four semesters and every homeroom class spends at least one semester in each of the work training areas: homemaking, shop, horticulture and

office skills. Those students who demonstrate the potential for possible work placements are given opportunities to work outside the school for a few hours during the school day.

One classroom from this school was selected for purposes of this research study. The class selected was in the area of homemaking. The participating teacher was female and tenured, with degrees in both home economics and special education. During the classroom observation phase of this study (October through December), a total of thirty-two (32) students were observed. It should be noted that, in mid-November, a change in the school semester occurred which involved changes in the classes of students taught by the homemaking teacher. All of the students observed, however, were moderately to severely intellectually limited between the ages of 16-21 years.

At the time of the classroom observations, the homemaking curriculum included cooking, sewing, crafts, and general housekeeping skills such as ironing, washing, drying and folding clothes. The homemaking teacher had two classrooms available to her. The primary classroom included a kitchen area and an area for student tables and chairs. The other classroom, which was used only occasionally, included a living room furniture area, a bedroom furniture area, a laundry area, sewing tables, and student tables and chairs.

This teacher stated that her primary teaching goal was "to promote as much independence (on the part of her

students) as possible" within the homemaking area of the school curriculum. This teacher believed that she had a responsibility to help her students become contributing members of their families.

Research Site 2

Research site 2 is in a special school which serves approximately 125-150 students; many of the students who attend this school come from professional, upper middle class families. Student ages range from 12 to 21 years and all students have moderate to profound intellectual limitations. The most severely to profoundly handicapped students are placed in a "self-contained" classroom. There are two "levels" of moderately to severely retarded students: intermediate (ages 12-16 years) and advanced (ages 16-21). Students change classes throughout the day and receive instruction in reading, math and personal work adjustment skills. The advanced level students receive intensified instruction in the work training areas of homemaking, shop, crafts, and office skills. In addition, art, music, library, and physical education are provided on a weekly basis. The school year is divided into four semesters and each advanced level homeroom class spends at least one semester in each of the work training program areas. A limited number of students who demonstrate potential for possible work placements are given opportunities to work outside the school for a few hours during the school day.

One classroom from the advanced level was selected to

participate in this research study. The class selected was in the area of office skills. The participating teacher was female and tenured with academic degrees in elementary education and special education. A total of thirty-five (35) students were observed during the classroom observation phase of this study (October through December). It should be noted that, in mid-November, a change in the school semester occurred which involved changes in the classes of students taught by the office skills teacher. All students observed were moderately to severely intellectually limited between the ages of 16-21 years.

At the time of the classroom observations, the office skills program encompassed a variety of activities: placing labels on envelopes, collating papers, and preparing mailings for a variety of businesses in the area. Businesses are encouraged to provide this type of work for these students. While there is no fee requested for these services, donations to the school are accepted.

The physical setting of the office skills classroom was arranged in a variety of work areas which provided enough table space for the activities previously described. This teacher's primary goal for her students was to "prepare them for a work orientation."

Research Site 3

Research site 3 is in a special school located in an area which includes families ranging from lower to upper middle class. Approximately 175-200 students attend this

school with a wide range of age levels and handicapping conditions. The elementary-aged and severely to profoundly handicapped students remain in self-contained classrooms throughout the school day. Moderately to severely intellectually limited students between the ages of 16-21 years change classes on a daily basis throughout the week to receive training in each of the following work areas: shop, custodial skills, homemaking, office skills, and horticulture. Reading and math are provided to these students every day. Art, music, library and physical education are provided on a weekly basis. Students who demonstrate potential for possible work placements are given opportunities to work outside the school for a few hours during the school day.

For purposes of this research study, one classroom from this school was selected for observation. The class selected was in the area of custodial skills and grounds maintenance. The participating teacher was male and tenured with academic degrees in both industrial arts and special education. A total of thirty-eight (38) students were observed during the classroom observation phase of this study. All students observed were moderately to severely intellectually limited males and females between the ages of 16-21 years.

At the time of classroom observations (October through December), the custodial/grounds maintenance program involved training in window washing, floor mopping, use of floor buffing machines, vacuuming and grounds maintenance (i.e.

raking leaves and use of a lawn mower). The teacher had one classroom but used the entire school area for instructional purposes. School halls were dust mopped on a daily basis and this teacher also had the responsibility of teaching his classes how to clean the school cafeteria after lunch each day. This teacher and his students, then, spent a large amount of time each day outside the classroom itself, working in other areas within the school and caring for the outside grounds when weather permitted.

This teacher believed that the primary goal of his program was to "expose students to a number of custodial/grounds maintenance activities so they can gain experience in performing these tasks." The program was work-oriented in order to "eventually prepare students for the work world."

Summary of Context

From the descriptions provided, it is obvious that each research site contributed a unique context to this study. However, similarities among the sites are also evident. All of the students who were observed (a total of 105) were between the ages of 16-21 years and had been diagnosed as moderately to severely intellectually limited. Each of the three research sites involved instruction in work training programs, whether it be in homemaking, office skills, or custodial/grounds maintenance.

Prior to a discussion of the results and interpretation of this study, classroom observation time is outlined for the

reader. In addition, several considerations regarding the nature of the decision-making opportunities observed are discussed.

Classroom Observation Time

Classroom observations of the three research sites were scheduled using a random selection procedure. However, it became apparent as the observations began that modifications to the observation schedule had to be made due to teacher absences, student absences, and special school activities which prohibited the researcher from observing. Appendix B provides the final classroom observation schedule for this study.

Table II (See p. 64) provides a break-down of classroom observation time for each research site. The total time spent in the three classrooms was one hundred and nine hours and fifteen minutes (109 hours, 15 minutes). Of this total time, 37 hours and 30 minutes was spent at research site 1 (Homemaking), 34 hours and 45 minutes at research site 2 (Office skills), and 37 hours at research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance).

Round 1 of the classroom observations was completed during the month of October. There was a total of 23 hours and 15 minutes of classroom observation during round 1. Rounds 2 and 3 of classroom observations were completed during the months of November and December respectively. Forty-three (43) hours of observation were logged in each of these rounds.

Nature of Decision-making Opportunities Observed: Some Considerations

While this study describes and analyzes the decision-making opportunities which teachers directly provided to their students, classroom observations also show that some students do initiate their own choices and decisions within the classroom. It can be argued that even student-initiated decisions are provided by teachers simply because they are allowed by these teachers. However, this researcher was interested only in the opportunities that the teachers themselves initiated or created for student decision-making or choice-making. Therefore, student-initiated decisions have not been included in the results of this study.

As the classroom observations progressed, it also became apparent that a distinction had to be made between a teacher-provided choice and a direction phrased as a question. For example, there were times when a teacher said, "_____, will you check the dryer please?" Questions such as this were considered polite directions or requests from the teacher. Although the possibility existed for a student to respond to such questions as if they were indeed choice-making opportunities, most students appeared to recognize them only as requests from the teacher. Students would often carry out the request without answering the teacher, demonstrating an understanding that a direction had been given.

In contrast, teachers could phrase questions in a manner that would indicate a student choice-making opportunity, such as "_____, would you like to check the dryer?" In this

example, the words "would you like" appear to signal a true choice for the student. The words "do you want" also provide the same potential for a student decision-making opportunity. In fact, the observational data does show that when teachers gave students choices using the words "would you like" and "do you want", some students did give negative responses. These responses were accepted by the teachers in all but one case. The words "would you like" and "do you want" therefore became the basis upon which teacher-provided choices and polite directions or requests were distinguished. Directions and requests from the teacher are not included in the data.

Another consideration that requires mention is the distinction made between "problem solving" and "decision-making." Problem solving tasks were evident during the classroom observations. For example, the custodial/grounds maintenance teacher asked a female student, "How will you sweep this rug? What kind of broom will you use?" This was not viewed as a decision-making opportunity. Instead, the teacher was giving the student a "problem" to solve -- the teacher knew the correct answer and he wanted to ascertain whether or not the student knew the correct answer also. Problem solving tasks such as this one were not considered personally relevant to the student. In addition, they did not reflect a true choice-making or decision-making opportunity. Since this study was concerned with describing and analyzing the opportunities students had for making personal choices or decisions for themselves, problem solving

exercises are not included in the data.

It has been mentioned previously (See Chapter III - METHODOLOGY) that the decision-making opportunities observed in this study were classified according to Shevin and Klein's (1984) choice-making category system as follows:

1- choices among activities;
2- whether or not to engage in an activity;
3- when to terminate an activity;
4- alternative means to accomplishing an objective; and
5- choices of partners.

For those decision-making opportunities which could not be classified in any of the above categories, the researcher created a miscellaneous category. This category will be fully discussed later in this chapter. It should be noted here, however, that there were ten (10) decision-making opportunities which could have been classified in <u>two</u> of the above-mentioned categories. This occurred most frequently in situations requiring students to make decisions <u>whether or not to engage in an activity</u> (category 2) <u>with a specific partner</u> (category 5). Students had to make their decisions based upon their preference or dispreference for the activity and/or the partner. The researcher had no way of ascertaining how the students made their final decision and it was therefore impossible to categorize these "combination" decision-making opportunities with certainty. Due to the ambiguity of these combination categories, they were eliminated from the final data analysis.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The observational data gathered from this study have

been analyzed to determine results in the following areas:

- number and rate of decision-making opportunities observed;
- category system of decision-making opportunities;
- students' immediate responses to decision-making opportunities;
- the dimension of time (morning vs. afternoon) in relation to decision-making opportunities;
- sex and functioning level of students in relation to decision-making opportunities; and
- group vs. individual decision-making opportunities.

Number and Rate of Decision-making Opportunities

Table III (See p. 82) details the frequency distribution of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study at each research site and all sites combined. A total of 282 decision-making opportunities were observed in this study. Research site 1 provided 130 of those opportunities, research site 2 -- 79, and research site 3 contributed 73. The rate of decision-making opportunities observed from all research sites combined was 1.29 per 30 minute period. Research site 1 had the highest rate at 1.73, followed by research site 2 at 1.14 and research site 3 at .99 (See Table IV, p. 83).

Research site 1 (Homemaking) accounted for 46% of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study. Due to an increase in the amount of observation time from round 1 to round 2, there was an increase in the number of decision-making opportunities observed during round 2. A decrease in the number of decision-making opportunities was evident in round 3 of the observations with an accompanying decrease in

TABLE III

NUMBERS (N) AND PERCENTAGES (%) OF
DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES OBSERVED

Round of Observation	Research Site						
	1 (Homemaking)		2 (Office Skills)		3 (Custodial/ Grounds)		Combined Sites
	N	%	N	%	N	%	Number
Round 1 (October)	33	46.5	25	35.2	13	18.3	71
Round 2 (November)	58	49.6	29	24.8	30	25.6	117
Round 3 (December)	39	41.5	25	26.6	30	31.9	94
Combined Rounds	130	46.1	79	28.0	73	25.9	282

TABLE IV

RATES OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES OBSERVED
(Per 30 minute period)

Round of Observation	Research Site			
	1 (Homemaking)	2 (Office Skills)	3 (Custodial/ Grounds)	Combined Sites
Round 1 (October)	1.74	2.17	.81	1.53
Round 2 (November)	2.07	1.00	1.03	1.36
Round 3 (December)	1.39	.86	1.03	1.09
Combined Rounds	1.73	1.14	.99	1.29

rate of those opportunities per 30 minute period. This decrease in frequency and rate may be related to an intensified work pressure evident during the month of December (Round 3). The homemaking teacher decided to teach her students how to make needlecraft holiday coasters for the upcoming holiday season. These coasters were to be sold at the school's Winter Season Program, and as the date of this program approached, the teacher became increasingly aware of the need for students to finish the coasters prior to the deadline. It is this work pressure felt by the teacher and her students that may explain the decrease in opportunities for student decision-making during the third round of observations. It is also possible that, as the study progressed, this teacher became less aware of the researcher in her classroom and therefore was not as concerned with showing the researcher the type of behavior she thought was expected. This may be an alternative explanation for the decrease in decision-making opportunities at research site 1 during round 3 of observations.

A total of 79 decision-making opportunities were observed at research site 2 (Office skills). Overall, this site accounted for 28% of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study. Although there was much more classroom observation time during round 2 compared to round 1, there was only a slight increase in the number of decision-making opportunities during round 2. In addition, there was a slight decrease during round 3. The rate of

decision-making opportunities at research site 2 also dropped steadily over the course of the study -- from 2.17 per 30 minute period during round 1 to 1.00 in round 2 and .86 in round 3. It appears that decision-making opportunities for students at research site 2 became less available as the study progressed. This finding may again be due to work pressures felt by the teacher and students. During the first round of classroom observations (October), there was little work (labeling, collating, and preparing envelopes for mailing) provided to the class from outside businesses. During the month of November (round 2), however, there was an increase in the amount of work which businesses provided for the students. This trend continued in round 3 (December) when the teacher and her students undertook a major mailing project. There was a deadline for this job (mid-December) and, as pressure to meet the deadline grew, opportunities for students to make choices and decisions became less frequent. Both teacher and students had one primary goal to accomplish and the emphasis was on speed and accuracy to meet the demands of that particular job. An alternative explanation for the steady decrease in decision-making opportunities at research site 2 may be that, over the course of the study, the teacher became less concerned with demonstrating behaviors she thought the researcher wanted to see.

Research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance) was most consistent across all rounds of observation in the frequency and rate of decision-making opportunities offered

to students. This site contributed 73 or 26% of the 282 total decision-making opportunities. The rate of decision-making opportunities per half hour period was .81 during round 1 and increased only slightly to 1.03 in both rounds 2 and 3. The work load for the teacher and students of research site 3 remained relatively stable during the three rounds of classroom observations, from October through December, and this may explain the consistent pattern in the frequency and rate of decision-making opportunities offered to students.

When comparing the three research sites in regard to number and rate of student decision-making opportunities, it is clear that research site 1 (Homemaking) produced the largest number of such opportunities as well as yielding a higher rate of opportunities per 30 minute period. The homemaking class contributed almost half of all student decision-making opportunities observed, with the other half almost equally divided between the office skills class and the custodial skills/grounds maintenance program. This appears to be a significant finding of this study. One explanation for this finding may be evident in the differences in work orientation among the three programs. The office skills and custodial skills/grounds maintenance programs were oriented toward the work world and attempted to provide students with skills that could be used later in a sheltered workshop environment or in an actual job situation. Both of the teachers of these programs highlighted the

preparation of their students for the work world as a primary goal of their teaching. Because these programs were organized and structured around a work orientation, teachers emphasized teaching students to perform a task in the most efficient and productive manner possible. This type of work training program may not lend itself to student decision-making.

By contrast, the homemaking class was not as work oriented as the other two programs. The homemaking teacher's primary goal was to promote as much independence as possible in her students in the area of homemaking skills. This teacher was interested in helping her students to become productive and contributing members of their families by teaching them such skills as cooking, sewing, crafts, and washing, drying, folding and ironing clothes. The emphasis here was on the home environment as opposed to a work environment. In general, people tend to have more control over their home environments and are able to make more personal decisions there than they can at their job. It is this home vs. work orientation that may explain the significant difference in frequency and rate of student decision-making opportunities between the homemaking classroom and the other two research sites.

Category System of Decision-making Opportunities

The student decision-making opportunities observed in this study were classified using Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities (1984):

1 - choices among activities;

2 - whether or not to engage in an activity;

3 - when to terminate an activity;

4 - alternative means to accomplishing an objective; and

5 - choices of partners.

Those decision-making opportunities that could not be classified appropriately in any of the above-mentioned categories were placed in a miscellaneous category (6) for later analysis.

Research site 1 (Homemaking)

Table V (See p. 89) shows the category rankings in relation to the number and percentage of student decision-making opportunities during all rounds of observation at research site 1 (Homemaking class). In every round, category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) ranks first with the highest number and percentage of decision-making opportunities classified in this category. Category 2 decision-making opportunities include the following examples: "Would you like to pour punch?", "Do you want to get the puzzle?", and "Would you like to work on the alphabet?"

Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranks second in rounds 2 and 3 and ranks third in round 1. Examples of these decision-making opportunities include the following: "Do you know the alphabet or do you want me to write it down for you?" (decision regarding need for assistance), "Where do you want to work?" (choice of work location), and "Are you ready to wipe out the microwave?" (decision regarding readiness to

TABLE V

NUMBERS (N), PERCENTAGES (%), AND RANK (R) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES BY CATEGORY: RESEARCH SITE 1 (HOMEMAKING)

Decision-making Category	Round of Observation											
	Round 1 (October)			Round 2 (November)			Round 3 (December)			Combined Rounds		
1-choices among activities	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R
	7	21	2	6	10	3	7	18	3	20	15	3
2-whether or not to engage in an activity	19	58	1	30	52	1	17	44	1	66	51	1
3-when to terminate an activity	1	3	4	1	2	5	2	5	4	4	3	5
4-alternative means to an objective	1	3	4	2	3	4	2	5	4	5	4	4
5-choice of partners	0	0	-	2	3	4	0	0	-	2	2	6
6-miscellaneous	5	15	3	17	29	2	11	28	2	33	25	2
a) choice of work location	Number			Number			Number			Number		
	0			0			1			1		
b) need for assistance	2			2			4			8		
c) readiness to begin activity	1			4			0			5		
d) food choices	2			2			3			7		
e) choices of materials	0			3			2			5		
f) quality of work	0			6			1			7		
g) relief from work	0			0			0			0		
Totals	33			58			39			130		

begin activity).

Category 1 (choices among activities) is ranked second in round 1 but third in rounds 2 and 3. Category 1 decision-making opportunities are characterized in the following questions asked by the teacher: "Do you want to do the crossword puzzle or a word search?", "Do you want to make cookies or do you want to continue working there?", and "Do you want to do a word search or make a Christmas tree?"

Overall, the top three rankings for research site 1 are: first -- category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), second -- category 6 (miscellaneous), and third -- category 1 (choices among activities). Categories 3 (when to terminate an activity), 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective), and 5 (choice of partners) are consistently ranked low across all rounds of observation. Examples of each of these categories include the following statements made by the teacher: "Are you tired of sewing yet?" (category 3), "You may do this (basting material) anyway you want" (category 4), and "Who would you like to help you cook?" (category 5).

Research site 2 (Office skills)

Table VI (See p. 91) shows the category rankings in relation to the number and percentage of student decision-making opportunities during all rounds of observation at research site 2 (Office skills). Category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) ranks first in all rounds of observation except round 3 where it ranks second. Category 2

TABLE VI

NUMBERS (N), PERCENTAGES (%), AND RANK (R) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES BY CATEGORY: RESEARCH SITE 2 (OFFICE SKILLS)

Decision-making Category	Round of Observation											
	Round 1 (October)			Round 2 (November)			Round 3 (December)			Combined Rounds		
1-choices	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R
among activities	4	16	3	5	17	3	2	8	3	11	14	3
2-whether or not to engage in an activity	11	44	1	11	38	1	8	32	2	30	38	1
3-when to terminate an activity	1	4	5	0	0	-	1	4	4	2	3	6
4-alternative means to an objective	2	8	4	3	10	4	2	8	3	7	9	4
5-choice of partners	2	8	4	0	0	-	1	4	4	3	4	5
6-miscellaneous	5	20	2	10	34	2	11	44	1	26	33	2
a) choice of work location	Number 2			Number 4			Number 3			Number 9		
b) need for assistance	2			3			3			8		
c) readiness to begin activity	1			0			0			1		
d) food choices	0			2			2			4		
e) choices of materials	0			0			1			1		
f) quality of work	0			1			2			3		
g) relief from work	0			0			0			0		
Totals	25			29			25			79		

decision-making opportunities are characterized in the following examples: "Do you want to take this package up to the office?", "Do you want to stuff envelopes?", and "Do you want to label?"

Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranks second in rounds 1 and 2 and first during round 3. Some examples of decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous are: "Do you think that it (a package wrapped by the student) looks better than your last one?" (decision regarding the quality of one's work), "Do you need the numbers or can you do it yourself?" (decision regarding need for assistance), and "You can sit wherever you want at the table" (choice of work location).

Category 1 (choices among activities) is consistently ranked third across all rounds of observation. Examples of these decision-making opportunities are: "Do you want to label or stuff envelopes?", "Do you want to seal or stuff (envelopes)?", and "Do you want to keep doing this (stuffing envelopes) or do you want me to find something else for you to do?"

Category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) ranks a close fourth in all rounds, except round 3 where it ranks third (along with category 1). Examples of category 4 decisions include the following statements made by the teacher: "You can do this (stuffing and labeling envelopes) however you want to," "You can do it (stuffing envelopes) anyway you want," and "Print it the way you want to."

Overall, the top rankings for research site 2 are: first -- category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), second -- category 6 (miscellaneous), third -- category 1 (choices among activities), and fourth -- category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective). Categories 3 (when to terminate an activity: "Do you want to take a break?") and 5 (choice of partners: "Do you want to work with Pat or Bill?") are ranked consistently low across all rounds of observation.

Research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance)

Table VII (See p. 94) shows the category rankings in relation to the number and percentage of student decision-making opportunities during all rounds of observation at research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance). Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranks first in observation rounds 2 and 3 and second in round 1. Examples of decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous include the following: "How does it (a rug that the student had vacuumed) look to you?" (decision regarding quality of one's work), "What's your choice for lunch?" (choices of food), and "Do you need help with the ladder?" (decision regarding need for assistance).

Category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) is ranked second in rounds 2 and 3, first in round 1. Decision-making opportunities classified as category 2 are characterized in the following examples: "Do you want to sweep the floor?", "Do you want to run an errand?", and

TABLE VII

NUMBERS (N), PERCENTAGES (%), AND RANK OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES BY CATEGORY: RESEARCH SITE 3 (CUSTODIAL SKILLS/GROUNDS MAINTENANCE)

Decision-making Category	Round of Observation											
	Round 1 (October)			Round 2 (November)			Round 3 (December)			Combined Rounds		
1-choices	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R
among activities	1	8	3	5	17	4	5	17	3	11	15	3
2-whether or not to engage in an activity	7	54	1	8	27	2	6	20	2	21	29	2
3-when to terminate an activity	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-
4-alternative means to an objective	1	8	3	6	20	3	2	7	4	9	12	4
5-choice of partners	0	0	-	0	0	-	2	7	4	2	3	5
6-miscellaneous	4	31	2	11	37	1	15	50	1	30	41	1
a) choice of work location	Number			Number			Number			Number		
	0			0			2			2		
b) need for assistance	0			5			1			6		
c) readiness to begin activity	0			1			0			1		
d) food choices	3			1			1			5		
e) choices of materials	0			0			0			0		
f) quality of work	1			2			3			6		
g) relief from work	0			2			8			10		
Totals	13			30			30			73		

"Would you like to clean the windows?"

Category 1 (choices among activities) ranks third in rounds 1 and 3, fourth in round 2. Examples of these decision-making opportunities are reflected in the following questions from the teacher: "Would you like to stay here or go to chorus?" and "What would you like to do now?"

Category 4 (alternative means to an objective) ranks third in rounds 1 (along with category 1) and round 2, dropping to fourth in round 3. Category 4 decision-making opportunities include questions such as: "How are you going to do this (rake leaves)?" and "How do you want to move the furniture?"

Overall, the top rankings for research site 3 are: first -- category 6 (miscellaneous), second -- category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), third -- category 1 (choices among activities), and fourth -- category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective). Categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners) are ranked consistently low across all rounds of observation.

All research sites combined

Table VIII (See p. 96) shows the category rankings in relation to the number and percentage of student decision-making opportunities during all rounds of observation for all three research sites combined. Category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) is ranked first in rounds 1 and 2 and second in round 3 of classroom observations. Category 6

TABLES VIII

NUMBERS (N), PERCENTAGES (%), AND RANK (R) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES BY CATEGORY: COMBINED SITES

Decision-making Category	Round of Observation											
	Round 1 (October)			Round 2 (November)			Round 3 (December)			Combined Rounds		
	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%	R
1-choices among activities	12	17	3	16	14	3	14	15	3	42	15	3
2-whether or not to engage in an activity	37	52	1	49	42	1	31	33	2	117	41	1
3-when to terminate an activity	2	3	5	1	.9	6	3	3	5	6	2	6
4-alternative means to an objective	4	6	4	11	9	4	6	6	4	21	7	4
5-choice of partners	2	3	5	2	2	5	3	3	5	7	2	5
6-miscellaneous	14	20	2	38	32	2	37	39	1	89	32	2
a) choice of work location	Number 2			Number 4			Number 6			Number 12		
b) need for assistance	4			10			8			22		
c) readiness to begin activity	2			5			0			7		
d) food choices	5			5			6			16		
e) choices of materials	0			3			3			6		
f) quality of work	1			9			6			16		
g) relief from work	0			2			8			10		
Totals	71			117			94			282		

(miscellaneous) ranks second during rounds 1 and 2 and ranks first in round 3. Category 1 (choices among activities) is consistently ranked third in all rounds of observation. Category 4 is consistently ranked fourth in all rounds of observation. Overall, the top four category rankings for all three research sites combined are: first -- category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), second -- category 6 (miscellaneous), third -- category 1 (choices among activities), and fourth -- category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective). Categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners) are ranked consistently low at all research sites across all rounds of observation.

In analyzing the data, it is significant to note that students are most often allowed to make decisions about whether or not they wish to engage in an activity. Forty-one (41) percent of all student decision-making opportunities observed were classified as category 2. However, it should be stressed that this result may be somewhat inflated due to an ambiguous aspect of category 2. Each of the participating teachers in this study exhibited a tendency to ask students questions such as "Do you want to iron?", "Would you like to stuff envelopes today?", and "Do you want to mop floors?" When these questions were asked, it was difficult for the researcher to ascertain whether true choices were in fact being given to the students or whether the teacher was merely being polite in giving students a suggestion or a direction.

The ambiguity of category 2 was pointed out even further by the teachers during the social validation phase of the research study. Each teacher, when given examples of category 2 decision-making opportunities such as the ones indicated above, told the researcher that whether or not a true choice was indeed being given depended upon at least two factors -- the individual student and the immediate situation.

A student who was considered a "good worker" and motivated to participate fully in school activities was more likely to be given a true choice of whether or not to engage in an activity. It was assumed that this type of student had the ability to make an appropriate decision. In contrast, a "lazy" or less motivated student was not likely to be given choices of whether or not to engage in an activity. It was assumed that this type of student probably would not wish to engage in any activity, if given a choice. Therefore, a choice was not given by the teacher.

Teachers also discussed the importance of the situation as a factor in determining whether true choices were being given to students regarding whether or not to engage in an activity. It appeared that, during times of highly structured activity and work pressure, less decision-making opportunities in this category were offered to students. The emphasis instead was on "getting the job done" in the most efficient and productive manner possible. During times of less structured activity and decreased work pressure,

teachers believed that they could offer more opportunities for their students to make true choices.

There is also the issue of student perception. Did students see these questions ("Do you want to iron?", "Would you like to stuff envelopes today?", and "Do you want to mop floors?") as true decision-making opportunities or did they see them instead as suggestions, commands, or directions? Responses could differ depending on the perceptions students have of such questions. Again, the ambiguity of category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) is evident. The researcher, who acted as a passive observer in the classroom, had no way to ascertain whether questions such as the ones discussed were true choice-making opportunities or not. It is therefore possible that, in some cases, the researcher made errors in judgement about such questions, classifying them as true choices when in fact they might not have been. This may be one reason for the high ranking of category 2 in this study. Still, it is clear that this particular category does account for a significant number of choices offered to students.

The second highest ranked category of student decision-making opportunities is category 6 (miscellaneous). Of 282 total decision-making opportunities, 89 were classified as "miscellaneous", or inappropriate for placement in any of Shevin and Klein's categories for choice-making opportunities. This represents a percentage of 32%. It therefore appears significant that Shevin and Klein's category system fails to

account for almost one-third of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study.

As shown in Tables V, VI, VII, and VIII, the miscellaneous category is comprised of various sub-categories such as choice of work location, need for assistance, readiness for activity, food choices, choices of materials, quality of work, and relief from work. Choice of work location is characterized by allowing students to decide where they prefer to work on a given activity. Examples of this category include statements from the teachers such as "Where would you like to work?", "You may sit wherever you want," and "Do you want to work here?" Decisions regarding work location account for 13% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

Decisions regarding need for assistance give students an opportunity to decide whether or not they want help from the teacher or another student in order to accomplish an objective. The teachers in this study provided these decision-making opportunities by asking questions such as "How are you doing -- do you need help?" Decisions regarding need for assistance account for 25% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

Decisions concerning a student's readiness for activity provide students with opportunities to determine when they wish to begin an activity. These decision-making opportunities are reflected in the following examples: "Are you ready to work now?", "Are you ready to begin?", and "Do

you want to do that now?" This sub-category accounts for 8% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

Food choices allow students to make decisions about the foods they wish to eat at lunch, snack, and break times. The teachers in this study offered food choices to students by asking students to make selections from the daily lunch menu (only at research sites 1 and 3). At research site 2, the school provided only one selection on the daily menu and therefore students could not have a choice. In addition, students who had money were allowed to purchase snack items during break times at all three research sites. Decisions regarding food choices accounts for 16% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

The sub-category choices of materials provides students with opportunities to decide what materials they wish to use when working on a given activity. Teachers generally provide these opportunities by displaying a variety of materials and then allowing students to make their individual choices. Choices of materials accounts for 7% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

Quality of work decisions require students to determine the quality of their own work. For example, teachers may say, "How does that look to you?" or "Do you think you did a good job?", thereby encouraging students to make decisions concerning the quality of their work. This sub-category accounts for 18% of the decision-making opportunities

classified as miscellaneous.

Decisions regarding relief from work allow students opportunities to choose other students who will relieve them from performing an assigned task. Examples of this type of decision-making opportunity are "Choose someone else to do that" and "Who do you want to try it next?" This sub-category accounts for 11% of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous.

These sub-categories are described here to provide the reader with an understanding of the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous. They will be discussed further in Chapter V in order to suggest an elaboration of Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities.

Category 1 (choices among activities) consistently ranks third in the frequency of all student decision-making opportunities observed in this study with a percentage of 15%. This result indicates that teachers do periodically provide alternative activities, allowing students to decide for themselves which alternative they prefer. Typically, the category 1 decision-making opportunities observed in this study involved the provision of only two alternatives. For example, teachers may say, "Do you want to play cards or checkers?" and "Do you want to do a puzzle or a word search?" Students are therefore allowed to make a selection of one activity from two possible alternatives deemed appropriate by the teacher. On occasion, the teacher might say "Okay, what

would you like to do?", implying a wide range of options available to a student. However, these cases were rare. While category 1 is supposed to involve choices among activities, it appears that more often than not these decision-making opportunities involve choices between activities.

Another finding is evident regarding the category system. Category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) appears to be more apparent at research sites 2 (Office skills) and 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance) than at research site 1 (Homemaking). This finding appears contradictory to the strong work orientation of research sites 2 and 3 where there may be less potential for students to decide how a job can be accomplished. In discussing this result with the participating teachers, however, other issues emerged. The homemaking teacher believed that, while some homemaking skills (e.g. cooking) were conducive to allowing students to use alternative means, there were many more homemaking skills (e.g. sewing, crafts, washing dishes, washing clothes) that were not. In comparison, the office skills teacher wanted her students to have opportunities to decide how they wanted to accomplish a given task. This teacher indicated that, by allowing students such opportunities, students could enjoy their jobs a little more because they could "do it their way." This same teacher did seem concerned, however, that students would not be given these same opportunities in a real job situation. It

appears, then, that category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) is somewhat dependent upon the activity involved and the attitude of the teacher in permitting such opportunities for students.

As demonstrated in Table VIII (See p. 96), categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners) are ranked consistently low at all research sites across all rounds of observation with a percentage of 2 in each of these categories. It may be that teachers are apprehensive about allowing students to determine when they wish to terminate an activity because students may choose to terminate before the assigned tasks are completed. The participating teachers in this study believe that one teaching goal in special education is to build the tolerance of students for work. To give students opportunities to terminate their activities whenever they choose may be in direct conflict with this goal of building tolerance for work. Therefore, teachers tend not to allow students such opportunities, as evidenced by these findings.

In attempting to understand why category 5 (choice of partners) is ranked consistently low, one must understand a pervasive attitude which exists within the philosophy of special education. Special educators are mandated by law to provide each and every student receiving special education services with an Individual Education Plan. This IEP is developed with the needs of each individual student in mind. The focus of attention on the individual may well be

reflected in the strategies special education teachers utilize to teach certain skills. In regular education, there tends to be more emphasis placed on students' working together to learn; there is more group discussion and activity. In comparison, special education teachers may feel more pressure to work on each student's individual goals, precluding the use of an extensive amount of group work.

Other reasons for the consistently low ranking of category 5 (choice of partners) may be reflected in the work orientation and the types of activities required in each of the three classrooms observed. The teachers of the office skills and custodial skills/grounds maintenance programs indicated that they were preparing students for the work world where opportunities for choosing partners are not usually readily available. In addition, many of the activities seen in the classrooms observed (sewing, ironing, stuffing envelopes, washing windows) are not conducive to working with a partner.

It should be noted that the participating teachers in this study believed that few opportunities for students to choose their own partners could be offered (except during leisure time) due to the nature of their programs and students. Further, it was assumed that if students were given opportunities to choose partners for activities, they would choose their friends and in many cases, this would not lead to educationally beneficial partnerships. Teachers did indicate however, that there were times when students could

work together on a given activity. At these times, the teachers preferred to make the partnership decisions in order to pair students of equal abilities or to pair a more capable student with one less capable.

In summary, it appears that the low frequency of category 5 (choosing partners) student decision-making opportunities may be due to variety of factors including the emphasis in special education on the achievement of individual goals, the work orientation of the classroom programs involved in this study, and the teachers' beliefs about the partnerships that would result. These factors tend to preclude opportunities for students to choose their own partners for classroom activities.

Summary

The results of this study indicate the following in regard to the categorization of student decision-making opportunities:

1) Most (41%) of the decision-making opportunities observed in this study were classified as category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity). The ambiguity of this category has been discussed. There were times when the researcher found it difficult to determine whether a question reflected a true choice-making opportunity for a student or whether the question was merely a politely phrased direction, command, or suggestion from the teacher. Teachers indicated that the intent of their questions was dependent upon at least two factors -- the

student and the situation.

2) Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranked second in the frequency of all student decision-making opportunities observed with a percentage of 32. It is apparent that Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities fails to account for approximately one-third of all student decision-making opportunities observed in this study. The following sub-categories within the miscellaneous classification emerged from the data: choice of work location, need for assistance, readiness for activity, food choices, choices of materials, quality of work, and relief from work. These sub-categories will be discussed further in Chapter V.

3) Category 1 (choices among activities) is consistently ranked third in the frequency of all student decision-making opportunities observed. Fifteen (15) percent of all decision-making opportunities observed were classified in category 1. It is significant to note that when giving students opportunities to make choices about their activities, teachers tend to provide only two alternatives rather than a variety of alternatives.

4) Category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) consistently ranks fourth across all rounds of observation. Seven (7) percent of all student decision-making opportunities observed were classified in category 4. Most of these opportunities were provided at research sites 2 and 3, indicating that the provision of

opportunities to use alternative means to accomplish an objective may be dependent upon the objectives or activities involved and on teacher attitude.

5) Category 3 (when to terminate an activity) is ranked consistently low at all research sites and across all rounds of observation. Only 2% of the student decision-making opportunities observed could be classified as category 3. Students may receive few opportunities to terminate their activities because teachers believe that they have a responsibility to build students' work tolerance levels. Teachers may also believe that, if students are allowed to decide when to terminate activities, those activities may be terminated earlier than the teachers deem appropriate.

6) Category 5 (choice of partners) is also ranked consistently low at all research sites and across all rounds of observation. Only 2% of all student decision-making opportunities could be classified as category 5. This low percentage may be due to a variety of factors such as the emphasis in special education on the achievement of individual student goals, the work orientation of the classroom programs involved in this study (which generally requires individual work skills), and the teachers' beliefs about the partnerships that would result if students were given opportunities to choose their own partners.

Students' Immediate Responses to Decision-making

Opportunities

One research question posed by this study involves the analysis of students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them. The analysis of student responses which follows discusses the demands each category places upon students and how they appear to proceed in making their decisions.

Category 1 decisions require students to make choices among activities. Teachers usually gave students two alternative activities and students had to select one. Few opportunities were observed where teachers gave students opportunities to choose from a wide variety of activities. Perhaps teachers did not believe that they could offer a wide selection of activities due to the nature of their classroom programs. The structure of the daily classroom routine may thus dictate a narrow selection of activities in which students could engage at any given time. It is also possible that teachers limited the alternatives available in order to assure that students would work on productive activities. The choice-making process could also be made easier for students by giving only two alternatives.

When offered choices among activities, students demonstrated the ability to make such choices rather easily and rapidly. For example, when one teacher asked a low functioning male student, "Do you want to help with the boxes or stuff envelopes?", the student immediately chose to help with the boxes. In another situation, one teacher asked a

high functioning female, "Do you want to make cookies or do you want to continue working here?" and the student chose to continue working on her own activity.

During the social validation phase of this research study, one participating teacher discussed an issue that deserves mention here. This particular teacher felt that her students often make their choices of activities based upon their perception of what the teacher wants them to do. If this is the case, then students may be making their choices based on a desire for approval from the teacher, not on their own true preferences for activity. One way to determine whether or not this actually occurs is to question the students at the time when the decision-making opportunity is first presented to them. Regardless of their motivation in making their choices, the students were still involved in a decision-making process.

Category 2 decision-making opportunities require students to make a yes or no response regarding whether or not they wish to engage in a specific activity. The analysis of student responses to these opportunities indicate that students make their decisions either verbally or non-verbally (i.e. shaking their head). For example, one low functioning female student was asked whether or not she wanted to wash windows; the student chose not to wash the windows by saying "no" and this decision was accepted by the teacher. In another example, a high functioning male was asked if he wanted to participate in a money game. This student made the

decision to participate by nodding his head "yes."

The ambiguity of category 2 decision-making opportunities has been discussed previously. When teachers ask questions such as "Would you like to iron?", "Do you want to stuff envelopes today?", or "Do you want to mop floors?", are true choice-making opportunities being given or are these questions merely polite ways for teachers to phrase directions, commands, or suggestions for activities? If this is something the researcher considers confusing, it may well be that students are also confused about the intent of such questions. Do students perceive these questions as true decision-making opportunities? Do students feel that they can say "no" to an activity without later repercussions from the teacher? As in category 1 decision-making opportunities, students may in fact respond to category 2 choices based upon what they <u>think</u> the teacher wants. Again, one way to resolve this issue would be to talk with students about their perceptions of the questions asked of them.

As discussed earlier, there were few opportunities observed for students to decide when to terminate an activity (category 3). Those opportunities that <u>were</u> provided generally involved teachers' asking if students wanted to take a break from their activities by saying, "Do you want to take a break"? When offered this choice, some students would take a break while others would not. In fact, some students refused to take a break even when the opportunity was offered by the teacher a second time. This may be due to the

perseveration some retarded students demonstrate in their work. One male student in particular was assigned to place labels on envelopes. When the teacher offered him an opportunity to terminate his activity and take a break, the student shook his head "no" on three occasions and continued working. It is interesting to note that one reason teachers gave for not allowing students opportunities to terminate their activity was because they believed that students would decide to terminate their activity too early, before accomplishing a given task. While this may be the case for some students, it does not appear to be a characteristic of <u>all</u> students -- some may not want to terminate even when the teacher deems it appropriate.

Category 4 provides students with opportunities to make decisions about using alternative means to accomplish an objective. Teachers would indicate these opportunities by assigning a specific task to a given student and saying, for example, "Do this any way you want." The more capable or higher functioning students were more likely to respond to these opportunities while lower functioning students demonstrated some confusion. For example, a high functioning male student was assigned to stuff and label envelopes; the teacher told this student, "You can do this however you want to." The student was able to arrange his work area in a manner that allowed him to complete the task in an orderly and step-by-step procedure. In contrast, the teacher of the homemaking class assigned a low functioning male to baste

some material together, saying "You can do this anyway you want." This student sat with a confused look on his face until the teacher showed him where and how to begin the activity. It therefore appears that less capable students may prefer to complete an assigned task in the same manner as the teacher. It may be that the higher the functioning level of the student, the more able that student is to generate ideas about alternative means to accomplishing an assigned task.

As indicated earlier, there were few opportunities observed for students to choose partners for activities (category 5). However, when they were allowed to do so, students generally chose their friends to be their partners. Teachers indicated that they expected this from their students and believed that this response did not usually lead to an educationally beneficial partnership. This may be one reason why category 5 decision-making opportunities were not made readily available to students.

Within category 6 (miscellaneous), decision-making opportunities were classified in several sub-categories. The first, choice of work location, provided students with opportunities to choose where they would like to perform a task or activity. When given such opportunities, it appears that students tend to choose a work location near their friends. By doing this, they were able to talk while working, to maintain eye contact with others, and to obtain

assistance from friends when needed.

The sub-category need for assistance allowed students opportunities to decide whether or not they required help from the teacher or another student in order to accomplish a given task. For example, a teacher might say, "Do you need help with that?" and the student therefore had to make a judgment about his/her ability to perform an activity independently. Analysis of the data regarding students' immediate responses indicates that the higher functioning or more capable the student, the less likely that student is to accept an offer of assistance from the teacher. Higher functioning students appear to be more willing to take the risk of testing their abilities to complete a task independently while less capable students choose to accept an offer of assistance from the teacher. This finding is probably best characterized in one particular example. The teacher of the office skills program assigned two students, one high functioning male and one low functioning female, to count envelopes into piles of ten (10). This teacher asked both students if they needed the assistance of a number line placed in front of them. The high functioning male declined the offer of assistance while the low functioning female chose to use the number line. It should be noted that both students were capable of counting to ten but the high functioning student appeared more willing to test his own ability to count the envelopes without the assistance of the number line.

The difference demonstrated between high and low functioning students in their decisions regarding need for assistance may be related to the research previously discussed in Chapter II regarding "learned helplessness." This research indicates that retarded children, because of their repeated experiences with failure in problem-solving situations, look to others for help more often than do normal children. It is reasonable to assume that, the lower the functioning level of a student, the more experiences with failure that student may have in problem-solving situations. While higher functioning students may recognize their abilities to complete some activities independently, lower functioning students may instead learn to depend on assistance from others.

Some students were also provided with opportunities to decide when they were ready to begin an activity. In these cases, students were required to prepare their work area and tell the teacher when they were ready to begin working. Teachers would ask questions such as "Are you ready now?" or "Do you want to do that now?" Generally, this type of decision-making opportunity was reserved for more capable and motivated students, probably because the teachers believed that they could depend on these students to do their work most efficiently and productively, without taking an indefinite amount of time to begin.

Food choices is another category of decision-making opportunities. At two of the research sites, students were

provided with opportunities to select, from two alternative menus, what they wished to eat for lunch if they were purchasing a hot lunch from the school. Additionally, students at all research sites were given "break" times in the afternoon and they were allowed to make choices regarding snacks they preferred. However, only students who had money to purchase snacks were given opportunities to make snack selections (i.e. soda, juice, crackers, fruit) and these students comprised a minority of the total group of students. The majority of students (those that did not have money) could not purchase snacks and therefore this decision-making opportunity was not available to them.

In some cases, students were allowed to make decisions regarding choices of materials. These few opportunities occurred most often at times when students were engaged in arts and crafts activities. These activities appeared conducive to allowing students to choose their own materials for coloring, needlecraft, and other arts and crafts. Perhaps these types of activities lend themselves more readily to allowing students opportunities to explore their own creativity by utilizing a variety of materials of their own choice.

Students at all research sites were periodically asked by their teachers to make decisions regarding the quality of their work. In one example, the teacher of the custodial skills/grounds maintenance program had assigned a male student to wet mop the classroom floor. Upon completion of

this job, the teacher asked the student, "How does it look to you?" Questions such as this require students to make judgements about their finished product and students appear to be hesitant in making such judgements. In the above example, when the teacher asked the student "How does it look to you?", the student responded by saying, "Well, how does it look to you?"

Most students prefer to allow the teacher to make a judgement about the quality of their work. This may be due to the fact that students expect the teacher to judge their work based on a criterion set by that teacher. Students may not be aware of what that criterion is and they may therefore feel uncomfortable about making a quality of work decision. It may also be that students, because they rarely are given opportunities to judge their own work, simply do not feel capable of making such judgements. Consequently, they prefer that teachers make the decision instead.

At research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance), students were given opportunities to choose other students who would relieve them from work. For example, the teacher at one time taught a lesson about how to vacuum a rug appropriately. The teacher asked for an initial volunteer to attempt the task. Thereafter, the teacher allowed each student to choose the next person who would then relieve the previous student from the work activity. In situations such as this, students appeared to choose other students who were not close friends. Perhaps because the

work task was not viewed as a rewarding activity by the students, they chose others with whom they were less friendly to relieve them from the activity. As mentioned previously, decision-making opportunities such as these were only evident at research site 3.

The analysis of students' immediate responses demonstrates that some decision-making opportunities may be easier for students to make while others appear more difficult, and require more thought. Students do not hesitate to make choices when given opportunities to make decisions about partners with whom they wish to work, work location, readiness for activity, food choices, or relief from work.

More difficult decision-making opportunities appear to include choices among activities and whether or not to engage in an activity. This may be due, in part, to a desire on the students' part to make choices based on what they think the teacher wants them to do. This requires the student to guess whether there is a "hidden" agenda. Some students may also have difficulty making decisions regarding when to terminate an activity, either choosing to terminate too early (before the task is completed) or choosing not to terminate at all (perseverating on a task). Making decisions regarding one's need for assistance may also be more difficult for students because such decisions require students to judge their own abilities to perform tasks independently. This involves a certain amount of risk-taking: the student may "fail" if the

offer of assistance from the teacher is not taken.

The most difficult decision-making opportunities appear to be in areas requiring the most independent thinking from students: alternative means to accomplishing an objective, choice of materials, and quality of work. To make decisions in these categories, demands are placed on students to think for themselves and to generate their own ideas about their work. This can be difficult for students who have not been given such opportunities previously. In fact, these decision-making opportunities appear to be reserved only for the most capable students. Even then, due to the intellectual limitations these students have, such decisions are probably much more difficult than they are for students of normal ability.

The Dimension of Time (Morning vs. Afternoon) in Relation to Decision-Making Opportunities Observed

The data from this study were also analyzed to determine if differences existed in the number, percentage, and rate of decision-making opportunities observed during morning hours (8:45 - 12:00 AM) compared to afternoon hours (12:00 - 2:30 PM). Tables IX and X (See p. 120) provide a detailed account of observation times for each individual research site and for all sites combined. Overall, there was more than twice as much observation time completed in the morning hours, 8:45 - 12:00 AM: 74 hours, 30 minutes compared to the afternoon, 12:00 - 2:30 PM: 34 hours, 45 minutes. It is therefore not surprising that most of the observed decision-making

TABLE IX

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TIME: MORNING (8:45-12:00 AM)

Round of Observation	Research Site			
	1(Homemaking)	2(Office Skills)	3(Custodial Grounds)	Combined Sites
Round 1 (October)	7 hours, 45 minutes	4 hours	6 hours, 30 minutes	18 hours, 15 minutes
Round 2 (November)	8 hours, 45 minutes	12 hours, 30 minutes	6 hours, 45 minutes	28 hours
Round 3 (December)	9 hours, 15 minutes	12 hours, 30 minutes	6 hours, 30 minutes	28 hours, 15 minutes
Combined Rounds	25 hours, 45 minutes	29 hours	19 hours, 45 minutes	74 hours, 30 minutes

TABLE X

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TIME: AFTERNOON (12:00-2:30 PM)

Round of Observation	Research Site			
	1(Homemaking)	2(Office Skills)	3(Custodial Grounds)	Combined Sites
Round 1 (October)	1 hour, 45 minutes	1 hour, 45 minutes	1 hour, 30 minutes	5 hours
Round 2 (November)	5 hours, 15 minutes	2 hours	7 hours, 45 minutes	15 hours
Round 3 (December)	4 hours, 45 minutes	2 hours	8 hours	14 hours, 45 minutes
Combined Rounds	11 hours, 45 minutes	5 hours, 45 minutes	17 hours, 15 minutes	34 hours, 45 minutes

opportunities occurred in the morning hours (See Table XI, p. 122). However, there are several results regarding the dimension of time which deserve mention.

The teacher of research site 1 (Homemaking) consistently provided a higher frequency and rate of decision-making opportunities to her students during the morning hours, except during round 3 when the rate was relatively equal for both morning and afternoon hours (See Tables XI nd XII pp. 122 and 123). When this result was discussed with the participating teacher, she indicated that most of her "prime teaching time" took place in the morning hours when decision-making opportunities could be made more available to students. After lunch, during afternoon teaching hours, both students and teachers may not be as motivated to make as many decisions as they make in the morning. The relatively equal rates of decision-making opportunities for both morning and afternoon hours during round 3 is probably due to the increased work pressure that occurred during the month of December. It should be recalled that the homemaking teacher was working with her classes very diligently throughout the entire school day to make as many coasters as possible before the mid-December deadline. This work pressure may have lead to a more stable rate of student decision-making opportunities because all of the classes taught by the homemaking teacher during the day were involved in the same activity. Overall, however, this teacher provided a higher rate of decision-making opportunities to her students during

TABLE XI

NUMBERS (N) AND PERCENTAGES (%) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES: MORNING (AM) 8:45-12:00 VS. AFTERNOON (PM) 12:00-2:30

Round of Observation	Research Site															
	1 (Homemaking)				2 (Office Skills)				3 (Custodial/ Grounds)				Combined Sites			
	AM		PM		AM		PM		AM		PM		AM		PM	
Round 1 (October)	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	30	91	3	9	13	52	12	48	13	100	0	0	56	79	15	21
Round 2 (November)	41	71	17	29	26	90	3	10	19	63	11	37	86	74	31	26
Round 3 (December)	26	67	13	33	21	84	4	16	17	57	13	43	64	68	30	32
Combined Rounds	97	75	33	25	60	76	19	24	49	67	24	33	206	73	76	27

TABLE XII

RATES OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES (Per 30 minute period): MORNING (AM) 8:45-12:00 VS. AFTERNOON (PM) 12:00-2:30

Round of Observation	Research Site							
	1 (Homemaking)		2 (Office Skills)		3 (Custodial/ Grounds)		Combined Sites	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Round 1 (October)	1.94	.86	1.63	3.43	1.00	0	1.53	1.50
Round 2 (November)	2.34	1.62	1.04	.75	1.41	.71	1.54	1.03
Round 3 (December)	1.41	1.37	.84	1.0	1.31	.81	1.13	1.02
Combined Rounds	1.88	1.40	1.03	1.65	1.24	.70	1.38	1.09

the morning hours.

The teacher at research site 2 (Office skills) also tended to provide more decision-making opportunities during the morning hours (See Table XI. p. 122). However, when the rates of decision-making opportunities are compared, a much higher rate of opportunities per thirty minute period is evident during the afternoon hours in round 1 (See Table XII, p. 123). This result may be due to the fact that this teacher taught a higher level, more capable class in the afternoon during the month of October (round 1). She therefore may have been more comfortable allowing these higher level students to make more decisions regarding their work. During rounds 2 and 3 of the classroom observations, the rates of decision-making opportunities in the morning and afternoon hours appear to be relatively equal. These equal rates may be due to the increased pressure felt by the teacher and students during the months of November and December. Several "jobs" from outside businesses were undertaken at this time, placing more demands on the teacher and students to work on these jobs rather consistently throughout the entire school day. Thus, a more stable rate of student decision-making opportunities in both the morning and afternoon may have resulted.

The teacher at research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance) was the most consistent in providing a higher number and rate of decision making opportunities to students

during the morning hours (See Tables XI and XII, pp. 122 and 123) in all rounds of observation. In discussing this result with the participating teacher, he indicated that there was more classroom teaching time in the morning hours during which he believed he could provide more decision-making opportunities to his students. During afternoon hours, students were generally engaged in doing a variety of jobs throughout the school building (i.e. mopping floors, vacuuming rugs, cleaning the cafeteria). This teacher believed that these jobs were less conducive to providing opportunities for student decision-making. The goal in the afternoon hours was to "get the jobs done" in the most efficient manner possible. A very strong work orientation existed in the afternoon at research site 3. This may be one reason why decision-making opportunities were less available to students in the afternoon compared to the morning.

Overall, higher numbers and slightly higher rates of student decision-making opportunities are seen during morning hours for all research sites combined across all rounds of observation (See Tables XI and XII, pp. 122 and 123). This finding may be due to the fact that teachers believe that more "prime teaching time" exists in the morning when they are more motivated to provide student decision-making opportunities. Teachers also indicate that they believe their students to be more motivated to make appropriate decisions in the morning when they are less tired. Differences in the numbers and rates of student decision-

making in the morning vs. the afternoon may also be due in part to the work orientation of the classroom programs. As classroom activities become more work-oriented, it appears that opportunities for students to make decisions become less available.

Sex and Functioning Level of Students in Relation to Decision-making Opportunities Observed

Data collected from the classroom observations were analyzed to compare the sex and functioning level of students in relation to the decision-making opportunities provided by teachers (See Table XIII p. 127). The functioning levels of students were determined by the participating teacher. Teachers were asked to rate each student's functioning level (high, middle, low) based on his or her ability to perform classroom activities. The teachers rated the more independent students as higher functioning while students who required more assistance from the teacher were considered middle to lower functioning.

At research site 1 (Homemaking), more decision-making opportunities (61) were offered to males than to females (37). This result is not surprising given the fact that the teacher of the homemaking class taught more males (23) than females (9) during the course of a normal school day. Regarding the functioning level of students, more choice-making opportunities (86) were provided to low and middle functioning students than to high functioning students (12). Again, this result does not appear significant because there

TABLE XIII

NUMBERS (N) AND PERCENTAGES (%) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES: BY SEX AND FUNCTIONING LEVEL OF STUDENTS

Sex and Functioning Level	Research Site							
	1(Homemaking)		2 (Office Skills)		3 (Custodial/ Grounds)		Combined Sites	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Males	61	62	40	56	26	46	127	56
High	10	16	12	30	7	27	29	23
Middle	19	31	12	30	5	19	36	28
Low	32	52	16	40	14	54	62	49
Females	37	38	31	43	30	54	98	44
High	2	5	8	26	3	10	13	13
Middle	9	24	12	39	11	37	32	33
Low	26	70	11	35	16	53	53	54
Totals	98	100	71	100	56	100	225	100

were more low to middle functioning students (29) than high functioning students (3) in the classes taught by the homemaking teacher. When sex and functioning levels of students are combined, it is evident that low functioning males received the highest number of decision-making opportunities (32) followed by low females (26). High functioning females received the least number of decision-making opportunities (2).

It is possible that these results may be attributed to the different expectations this teacher may have for her students. Homemaking is still viewed as primarily a female-oriented curriculum area and the teacher may expect higher functioning females to perform homemaking activities more independently than males. If this is the case, high level females may be left on their own more, with minimal assistance from or interaction with the teacher. The less interaction the teacher has with these females, the less likely she is to provide direct choice-making opportunities to them. In comparison, the teacher may feel the need to interact more with the male students in the class and give them direct guidance in performing the homemaking skills being taught. Because there may be more interaction time with males, more teacher-provided decision-making opportunities to males may result.

At research site 2 (Office skills), more decision-making opportunities (40) were provided to males than to females (31). This is not surprising due to the fact that there were

more males (20) than females (15) in the classes taught by the office skills teacher. There were also more low to middle functioning students (22) than high functioning students (13) in these classes. As a result, the lower functioning groups had a larger number of decision-making opportunities (51) than high level students (20). When sex and functioning levels are combined, the results indicate that low functioning males received the highest number of decision-making opportunities (16). Overall, it appears that lower functioning students received more opportunities to make decisions within the office skills classroom.

This result is probably due in part to the fact that more lower functioning students were taught by the office skills teacher. However, another factor to be considered is that of the teacher's expectations of her students. Because the teacher may expect more independence from the higher level students, these students may not receive as much teacher interaction time as lower level students may require. Lower level students probably need more supervision and interaction from the teacher in order to complete tasks appropriately. It seems reasonable that the more interaction time a teacher devotes to a given group of students, the more opportunities that teacher can provide for decision-making among those students.

There were equal numbers of male (19) and female (19) students at research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance), yielding a relatively equal distribution of

decision-making opportunities between the two sexes: twenty-six (26) for males; thirty (30) for females. The teacher of the custodial skills/grounds maintenance program indicated, as did the other two participating teachers, that he had more low to middle functioning students (28) than high functioning students (10) in his classes. Not surprisingly, then, results indicate that more of the decision-making opportunities observed at research site 3 were provided to the lower level students (46) compared to the high level students (10). When sex and functioning level are combined, it is evident that low functioning females received the highest number of decision-making opportunities with sixteen (16). Low functioning males followed closely with fourteen (14). Overall, at research site 3, it appears that lower level students were provided with more decision-making opportunities than high level students, with a relatively equal distribution of opportunities between the sexes.

This result appears to be consistent with the proportions of students in classes taught by the custodial skills/grounds maintenance teacher: an equal number of students of each sex and more lower functioning students than high level students. Again, the expectations of the teacher may also be considered here. It may well be that the teacher assumes that higher level students are more capable of performing work activities and can work independently with minimal assistance from or interaction with the teacher. Lower level students, however, may require more teacher

attention in order to complete tasks appropriately. If the teacher interacts more often with the lower functioning group of students, it is more likely that he or she can directly provide decision-making opportunities to that group of students.

Overall in this study, more of the observed decision-making opportunities were provided to males and to lower functioning students. This result is to be expected when one considers that there were more males (62) than females (43) and more lower level students (79) than high level students (26) in the special education classrooms observed. Another factor that may also contribute to these results is the differences in teacher expectations for high functioning students compared to lower functioning students. Because lower level students may place more demands on teacher time, requiring more assistance and supervision, this group of students may be more likely to receive decision-making opportunities directly provided by the teacher. In comparison, high level students, because they are more autonomous in performing classroom activities, may not receive as much teacher interaction time and are thus less likely to receive as many teacher-provided decision-making opportunities. It may be that high functioning students are indeed making decisions on their own. As they work they may initiate their own choices. Student-initiated decisions, however, were not proposed as a category for observation in this particular research study.

Group vs. Individual Decision-making Opportunities

As demonstrated by Table XIV (See p. 133), most of the decision-making opportunities observed in this study were provided to individual students as opposed to groups of students. Of the 282 total decision-making opportunities, only fifty-seven (57) were choices offered to a total group.

Of the 57 choices offered to groups of students, only two (2) required a group decision -- the remainder (55) required students to make individual responses to the decision-making opportunities provided. The two decision-making opportunities that required group decisions were both observed at research site 1, the homemaking class. Both of these opportunities involved the teacher asking the total class to decide how many students should be allowed to cook on a particular day.

The remainder of decisions offered to groups of students (55) involved teachers describing specific jobs or activities that had to be done on a given day and then requesting volunteers. While this type of decision-making opportunity was offered to groups of students, each individual student had to make a choice or decision for himself or herself regarding whether or not he or she wished to volunteer. Therefore, these decision-making opportunities, although offered to a total group, actually required students to make individual responses.

The high occurrence of decision-making opportunities provided to individual students as opposed to groups of

TABLE XIV

NUMBERS (N) AND PERCENTAGES (%) OF DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES: GROUP VS. INDIVIDUAL

Decision-making Opportunities	Research Site							
	1 (Homemaking)		2 (Office Skills)		3 (Custodial/ Grounds)		Combined Sites	
Decisions offered to individual students	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	98	75.4	71	89.9	56	76.7	225	79.8
Decisions offered to groups of students	32	24.6	8	10.1	17	23.3	57	20.2
a) requiring individual responses	30	93.8	8	100	17	100	55	96.5
b) requiring group response	2	6.3	0	0	0	0	2	3.6
Totals	130	100	79	100	73	100	282	100

students may be due to the emphasis special education places on individualizing the educational programs of handicapped students. Every student that receives special education services has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which outlines specific goals and objectives designed to meet that student's unique educational needs. Special education teachers are responsible for implementing these plans for their students. Within any given special education class, there may be a wide range of student ability levels. Because this variability exists, special education teachers find it more difficult to teach to an entire group or class of students. Instead, students are often engaged in different activities which are planned to meet the special needs of each individual. This type of teaching strategy is not conducive to providing group decision-making opportunities. If the emphasis is primarily on the educational needs of individual students, it appears reasonable that decision-making opportunities are oriented toward that emphasis also.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This study was designed as a field study, utilizing ethnographic techniques to observe, describe, and analyze the types of decision-making opportunities provided to moderately intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years within special education classrooms. There were one hundred nine (109) hours and fifteen (15) minutes of classroom observation time distributed among three classroom settings: homemaking,

office skills, and custodial skills/grounds maintenance. The data have been analyzed, yielding results in the following areas:

- number and rate of decision-making opportunities;
- category system of decision-making opportunities;
- students' immediate responses to decision-making opportunities
- the dimension of time in relation to decision-making opportunities observed;
- sex and functioning level of students in relation to decision-making opportunities observed; and
- group vs. individual decision-making opportunities.

In summary, the results of this study indicate the following:

1. Number and rate of decision-making opportunities - Students at research site 1 (homemaking) were provided with more decision-making opportunities than students at either research site 2 (office skills) or research site 3 (custodial skills/grounds maintenance). This result may be attributable to the strong work emphasis at research sites 2 and 3 vs. the home-orientation of research site 1. The participating teachers at research sites 2 and 3 accepted a responsibility to prepare their students for the work world and their classrooms programs reflected this orientation. In comparison, the homemaking teacher at research site 1 assumed responsibility to teach her retarded students to be contributing members of their homes and families. It appears that the more work

oriented a classroom program is, the less conducive it is to providing opportunities for student decision-making.

2. Category system of decision-making opportunities - As student decision-making opportunities were observed, they were classified using Shevin and Klein's (1984) category system of choice-making opportunities.

   A. Category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) ranks first in the frequency of decision-making opportunities provided to students. This means that, of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study, teachers allowed students to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in selected activities more often than any other decision-making opportunity. It should be noted, however, that this frequency count of category 2 decisions may be somewhat inflated due to the ambiguity of the category. One must question whether teachers are providing true choices to their students or are merely providing suggestions, commands, or directions for activities.

   B. Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranks second in the frequency distribution of student decision-making opportunities observed. This finding indicates that Shevin and Klein's category system for choice-making failed to account for approximately one-third of all the decision-making opportunities observed in this study. A variety of sub-categories comprised category 6 (miscellaneous): choices of work location, need for

assistance, readiness to begin an activity, food choices, choices of materials, quality of work, and relief from work. It appears that Shevin and Klein's category system requires some revision in order to account for the decision-making opportunities classified as miscellaneous. This will be discussed further in Chapter V.

C. Category 1 (choices among activities) ranks third in the frequency of total decision-making opportunities observed in this study. When providing students with category 1 decisions, teachers tend to give students two alternatives for an activity, allowing students to choose the one they prefer. Students are not usually provided with opportunities to select from a wide range of activities. This may be due to the structure of the classroom program, which requires students to be engaged in activities deemed by the teacher to be appropriate for them. Providing only two alternatives for activities also makes category 1 decisions easier for students by limiting the choices available to them.

D. Some decision-making opportunities in category 4 (alternatives means to accomplishing an objective) were evident, especially at research sites 2 (Office skills) and 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance). This finding may be attributable to a willingness on the part of the teachers of these two programs to allow students to use alternative means for accomplishing

work objectives. In fact, the teacher at research site 2 (Office skills) indicated that she purposefully tried to provide such decision-making opportunities to her students, believing that students could make their jobs less burdensome if they were allowed to "do it their own way." In comparison, the teacher at research site 3 (Homemaking) did not believe that the activities and skills she taught were conducive to providing students with opportunities to use alternative means for accomplishing objectives.

E. There were few decision-making opportunities observed in categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners). Teachers appear hesitant to allow students to decide when they want to terminate an activity, believing that these students will terminate too early (before accomplishing a task) or too late (perseverating on a task). The participating teachers in this study also indicated that they do not often allow students to choose their own partners for classroom activities because students have a tendency to choose their friends, rather than choosing other students deemed more appropriate by the teacher.

3. Students' Immediate Responses - The participating students in this study did demonstrate abilities to make choices for themselves. It appears that students may find it easier to respond to the following types of decision-making opportunities: choice of partners, choice of work

location, readiness for activity, food choices, and choosing other students to relieve them from a work activity. More difficult decisions may include: choices among activities and whether or not to engage in an activity (because students may be looking for a "hidden" agenda from the teacher providing such choices), when to terminate an activity (some students demonstrate a need to perseverate on an activity), and need for assistance (because there may be a conflict on the part of the student who wants to be independent but hesitates to take the risk of failing if assistance is not accepted). It appears that the decision-making opportunities students find most difficult to make are: alternative means to accomplishing an objective, choices of materials and quality of work. It is hypothesized that these decision-making categories require more independent thinking from the student and may therefore be the most difficult decisions to make.

4. Time dimension (morning vs. afternoon) in relation to decision-making opportunities observed - Results of this study indicate that student decision-making opportunities are provided by teachers at a higher frequency and a slightly higher rate during morning (8:45 - 12:00 AM) hours. This finding may be attributed to the fact that the participating teachers in this study generally believed that there was more "prime" teaching time during the morning hours and they could therefore provide

students with more opportunities to make choices and decisions. These teachers also believed that students were more motivated and capable of making decisions in the morning when they are less tired of school activities.

5. Sex and functioning level of students in relation to decision-making opportunities observed - Overall, males and lower functioning students received more opportunities for decision-making. This is not surprising given the fact that there were more males and lower functioning students involved in this study. It is also hypothesized that lower level students, because they may demand more attention and supervision from the classroom teacher, receive more decision-making opportunities because they spend more time interacting directly with the teacher. Higher functioning students who demonstrate more independence in performing classroom activities may not receive as much interaction time with the teacher and therefore could be less likely to be provided with decision-making opportunities directly from the teacher.
6. Group vs individual decision-making opportunities - This study clearly shows that teachers provide many more decision-making opportunities to individual students than groups of students. The emphasis special education places on individualizing the educational programs of students may be a contributing factor to this result. Special education teachers tend to teach to individual students, rather than groups of students. It is therefore

reasonable to assume that teachers probably also tend to provide more decision-making opportunities to individual students than groups of students.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes a summary of conclusions drawn from this study in relation to each research question. Implications for curriculum development, teacher education and future research are also discussed.

The major purpose of this research study was to observe, describe, and analyze the types of decision-making opportunities provided to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years within special education classrooms. By utilizing ethnographic techniques, the researcher was able to gather observational data in order to address the following research questions:

1. What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms?
2. How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?
3. What are the students' immediate responses to the opportunities provided to them?
4. Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this present

study? Can it be expanded to include other categories?

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study are summarized in relation to each of the research questions.

1. What types of decision-making opportunities are offered to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms?

The researcher used the category system of choice-making opportunities proposed by Shevin and Klein (1984) to classify the decision-making opportunities observed in this study. These categories are:

1 - choices among activities;
2 - whether or not to engage in an activity;
3 - when to terminate an activity;
4 - alternative means to accomplishing an objective; and
5 - choice of partners.

Observed decision-making opportunities which did not appear appropriate for classification in any of the above-mentioned categories were placed in a sixth category labeled "miscellaneous".

Data analysis regarding the types of decision-making opportunities provided to students reveals that most of the decision-making opportunities observed in this study were

classified in category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity). Of the 282 total decision-making opportunities, 117 were considered category 2, a percentage of 41. This result indicates that teachers tend to provide students with choices about whether or not to engage in an activity more often than any other type of decision-making opportunity observed in this study. This conclusion may be somewhat tentative, however, given the ambiguity of category 2. When teachers ask students questions such as "Do you want to do needlecraft today?", "Would you like to stuff envelopes?", or "Do you want to mop the floors?", the intent of the teacher may be ambiguous. Are these questions true choices or are they actually suggestions, commands, or directions? If a student was to give a negative response to the question, would that response be acceptable to the teacher? If so, the question does involve a true choice-making opportunity; if not, a true choice-making opportunity is not provided. The teachers themselves confirmed the ambiguity of category 2, indicating that the intent of the questions described above depended upon the individual student and the immediate situation.

The students themselves tended to respond to these category 2 questions in an affirmative manner, indicating either that they really did want to engage in the activity or that they perceived the question as a suggestion or direction from the teacher and therefore believed that they had no real choice. The researcher, acting as a passive observer in the

classroom, had no means to determine whether true choices were indeed being given. The researcher therefore chose to assume that the teacher was providing a decision-making opportunity and that students perceived them as such. Subsequently, the frequency of category 2 opportunities may be somewhat inflated. Still, it does appear that the teachers in this study provided category 2 choices more often than any other type of decision-making opportunity.

Category 6 (miscellaneous) ranked second in the frequency distribution of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study with a percentage of 32. Further analysis of these miscellaneous opportunities yielded several new categories such as: choices of work location, need for assistance, readiness to begin an activity, food choices, choices of materials, quality of work, and relief from work. A detailed discussion of these categories is provided later in this section.

Category 1 (choices among activities) ranked third in the frequency distribution of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study with a percentage of 15. The observational data also indicate that, when teachers provide category 1 choices to their students, they tend to give only two alternatives, thereby forcing students to choose one or the other. Students in this study were not given open-ended decision-making opportunities to choose their own activities within the classroom. Perhaps one explanation for this may be that the teachers did not believe

that they could offer a variety of choices. Special education classes tend to be highly structured with a strong emphasis on the accomplishment of individual student objectives. Teachers may therefore believe that they are limited in the number of choices for activities that they can offer their students. In addition, the possibility exists that teachers intentionally limit the number of choices for activities they provide in order to make the decision easier for students. Teachers may believe that students can make decisions more easily when given only two alternatives rather than a variety of possibilities.

Category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) ranked fourth in the frequency distribution of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study, indicating that the teachers in this study did allow students opportunities to utilize a variety of means in order to complete assigned tasks. However, category 4 decisions represent a relatively small percentage (7%) of the total decision-making opportunities observed. It appears that this type of decision is usually reserved for more capable students who demonstrate the ability to perform tasks independently.

Categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners) represented small percentages (2%) of the total decision-making opportunities observed. This result indicates that the teachers in this study usually did not provide opportunities for their students to decide when

to terminate an activity or with whom they wished to work. Teachers may be hesitant to allow students to decide when they want to terminate an activity, believing that students will terminate too early (before accomplishing a task) or too late (perseverating on an activity). Teachers appear reluctant to allow students to choose their own partners, believing that students will choose "friends" rather than other students deemed more appropriate by the teacher.

To summarize, the results of this study indicate that most decision-making opportunities offered to students were classified as category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), category 6 (miscellaneous) and category 1 (choices among activities). Relatively few student decision-making opportunities were observed in categories 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective), 3 (when to terminate an activity), or 5 (choice of partners).

2. How do the decision-making opportunities observed vary from one classroom to another?

This study involved observations in three different classrooms: homemaking, office skills, and custodial skills/grounds maintenance. A comparison of the results from each research site indicates that the homemaking teacher provided more (46%) of the decision-making opportunities observed in this study, while the office skills teacher and custodial skills/grounds maintenance teacher shared relatively equal percentages: 28 and 26 respectively. In

addition, the rate of decision-making opportunities per thirty minute period was higher in the homemaking class (1.73) compared to the office skills class (1.14) and the custodial skills/grounds maintenance program (.99). The differences seen between the homemaking site and the other two sites may be due to differences in the orientation of the classroom programs. The homemaking teacher was primarily concerned with helping students become contributing members of their families. Classroom activities centered around skills related to home care and maintenance. In comparison, the office skills class and the custodial skills/grounds maintenance class were structured more as work training programs, preparing students for the work world. The data suggest, then, that the more work-oriented a classroom program is, the less opportunity there may be for students to make their own choices and decisions. The nature of work training programs may dictate that certain jobs be done in the most efficient and productive manner possible. In order to accomplish the goals of efficiency and productivity, work is usually highly structured and organized. The structure and organization of the work programs therefore may not be conducive to allowing many student decision-making opportunities.

The types of decisions-making opportunities offered to students were relatively consistent at all three research sites. Categories 2 (whether or not to engage in an

activity), 6 (miscellaneous), and 1 (choices among activities) represented the majority of decision-making opportunities provided to students in this study. Few decision-making opportunities were observed in categories 3 (when to terminate an activity) and 5 (choice of partners).

Some category 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) decisions were evident, representing 7% of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study. Most category 4 decision-making opportunities were provided at research sites 2 (office skills) and 3 (custodial skills/grounds maintenance). The participating teacher at research site 2 indicated her desire to make the work tasks more pleasurable for her students by allowing them to complete their tasks in a variety of acceptable manners. This teacher did not believe that it was necessary for students to perform a task in exactly the same manner as she might demonstrate. Instead, she allowed students opportunities to explore other ways in which to accomplish objectives. In comparison, the teacher at research site 1 indicated that she believed that the skills she taught in the homemaking program were less conducive to providing students with opportunities to use alternative means to accomplish objectives.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that more decision-making opportunities were provided to students at research site 1 (Homemaking) compared to either research site 2 (Office skills) or research site 3 (Custodial

skills/grounds maintenance). While the number of student decision-making opportunities varied from one research site to another, the types of opportunities provided remained relatively consistent at all sites. Most decision-making opportunities observed were classified in the following three categories: 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity), 6 (miscellaneous), and 1 (choices among activities). Relatively few decision-making opportunities were observed in categories 4 (alternative means to accomplishing an objective), 3 (when to terminate an activity), and 5 (choice of partners). It does appear, however, that category 4 decisions (alternative means to accomplishing an objective) were more evident at research sites 2 (Office skills) and 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance) compared to research site 1 (Homemaking). This result may be attributable to the different attitudes the participating teachers had toward allowing students to use alternative means for accomplishing objectives.

3. What are the students' immediate responses to the opportunities provided to them?

The analysis of students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them demonstrates that the participating students in this study were able to make choices for themselves. It appears that students may respond more readily to the following types of decision-making opportunities: choice of partners, choice of work

location, readiness for activity, food choices, and choosing other students to relieve them from a work activity.

Some decisions appear to require more thought from students. Choices among activities (category 1) and whether or not to engage in an activity (category 2) are examples. Students may have a tendency to look for a "hidden" agenda from the teacher when provided with these types of decision-making opportunities. Students may view these opportunities as suggestions or directions, rather than true choices. Deciding when to terminate an activity (category 3) also appears to be more difficult for some students who may tend to perseverate on an activity. In addition, making a decision regarding the need for assistance can be more difficult because there may be a conflict on the part of the student who wants to be independent but hesitates to take the risk of failing if assistance is not accepted. Decisions that appear to require the most independent thinking from students and which therefore may be the most difficult decisions to make are in the following categories: alternative means to accomplishing an objective, choices of materials, and quality of work.

It therefore appears that the teachers in this study provided most of their students with decision-making opportunities at a difficulty level commensurate with their ability levels. In general, lower functioning students were allowed to make choices regarding their work location and food preferences, for example. Moderately capable students

were also offered choices among activities and opportunities to decide whether or not they needed assistance while the most difficult decision-making opportunities (alternative means to accomplishing an objective and quality of work decisions) were generally reserved for the higher functioning students.

4. Is Shevin and Klein's category system of choice-making opportunities replicated in this present study? Can it be expanded to include other categories?

The results of this study provide substantiating evidence for the categories of choice-making opportunities devised by Shevin and Klein (1984). Student decision-making opportunities were observed in all of the categories outlined by Shevin and Klein. From the perspective of a researcher, however, the ambiguous nature of category 2 (whether or not to engage in an activity) needs to be addressed within the methodology of any future studies. It may be that teachers should be asked their intentions immediately after they provide category 2 decision-making opportunities to their students. The students' perceptions of such opportunities may also need clarification before such observations are classified as true decision-making opportunities.

While the results of this study do demonstrate the validity of Shevin and Klein's five categories, it is also evident that the category system requires expansion to include those decision-making opportunities classified by

this researcher as "miscellaneous". The miscellaneous category accounted for 32% of all decision-making opportunities observed in this study. Clearly then, the category system of choice-making opportunities proposed by Shevin and Klein fails to exhaust the the possibilities for students to make decisions within classrooms.

The results of this study suggest that other categories of decision-making may be added to the categories previously described by Shevin and Klein. The potential new categories are discussed below.

Choices of work location: In addition to providing opportunities for students to make choices between or among activities, teachers also offer students opportunities to decide where they wish to work on a given activity. The nature of some classroom activities can dictate the location of the activity (i.e. cooking). However, the potential for students to make decisions regarding their work locations for some classroom activities should not be overlooked.

Choices regarding need for assistance: Students were also given opportunities to make decisions regarding whether or not they needed assistance to perform certain tasks or activities. Rather than teachers' making these judgments for students, the possibility exists for teachers to ask students questions such as "Would you like some help?", thereby allowing students to decide for themselves.

Readiness to begin activity: Just as students were given opportunities to make decisions about when to terminate an activity, they were also allowed to determine when to begin an activity in some situations. It is possible for teachers to assign a student to perform a certain activity within the classroom and then allow that student to decide when he or she wishes to begin.

Food choices: Students were provided with opportunities to make choices regarding the foods they wished to eat at lunch, snack, and break times during the school day. In the homemaking program, it may also be possible to allow students the opportunity to choose the foods they want to learn to prepare.

Choices of materials: Many classroom activities are structured in a way that determines the type of materials necessary for completing those activities. However, the results of this study show that possibilities do exist for allowing students to choose their own materials, especially in the area of arts and crafts activities. Teachers can provide a variety of materials for such activities and permit students to create their own work.

Decisions regarding quality of work: The results of this study indicate that students tend to rely on teachers to judge the quality of their work, even when teachers provide opportunities for them to make their own judgments.

Students can be guided by teachers to determine appropriate standards of quality for work and once these standards have been determined, teachers can then provide students with the responsibility of making decisions regarding the quality of their own work.

Relief from work: There may be times during the school day when students work as a group to complete certain classroom activities. These times provide the potential for teachers to allow students opportunities to choose other students who can relieve them from such work activities.

In addition to the formal research questions posed by this study, data analysis also provides support for the following conclusions:

1. The participating teachers involved in this study demonstrated a tendency to provide student decision-making opportunities at a slightly higher rate during morning hours as compared to afternoon hours. It appears that these teachers believe that they are more motivated to provide such decision-making opportunities for students during "prime" teaching hours which are generally in the morning. These teachers also believe that their students may be more motivated to make choices and decisions in the morning when students are less tired.
2. Overall, the results of this study indicate that males and lower functioning students received more

opportunities for decision-making than did females and higher functioning students. This result is not surprising given the fact that there were more males and more lower functioning students involved in this study. It is also possible, however, that lower functioning students who may demand more attention and supervision from the teacher, may receive more teacher-provided decision-making opportunities because they spend more time interacting directly with the teacher. In comparison, higher functioning students who demonstrate more independence in their work may not require as much teacher attention and supervision as do the lower functioning students. Higher functioning students may therefore be less likely to receive teacher-provided decision-making opportunities. It may be that higher functioning students are initiating their own choices and decisions. However, this hypothesis was outside the realm of this particular research study.

3. The results of this study clearly show that teachers provide more decision-making opportunities to individual students rather than to groups of students. The emphasis that special education places on individualizing the educational programs of exceptional children may be a contributing factor to this result. Because special education teachers have a tendency to teach to individual students rather than to groups of students, it is reasonable to assume that these teachers may also tend to

provide more decision-making opportunities to individual students rather than to groups of students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the possibilities that exist for special education teachers to provide opportunities for decision-making among their moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years. The results also show that these students are capable of making choices and decisions for themselves.

However, decision-making is rarely included as an explicit component of the special education curriculum. In general, the special education curriculum has been built upon task analyses of skills which are relegated to behavioral goals and objectives. Decision-making is not explicitly addressed within this framework, even though the literature reviewed attests to its importance with the handicapped population (Goode and Gaddy, 1976; Grigsby and Harshman, 1977; Ross and Ross, 1978; Heller, 1978; Klein and Babcock, 1979; Breuning et al., 1981; Shevin and Klein, 1984; Guess and Siegel-Causey, 1985; Guess, Benson and Siegel-Causey, 1985).

The responsibility for providing students with opportunities to make choices and decisions ultimately rests with the teachers who work directly with such students. Teachers can facilitate the student decision-making process by utilizing a category system of choice-making opportunities

to assess and build upon their current practices within the classroom. The results of this study clearly show that teachers can provide student decision-making opportunities in the following areas: choices among activities, whether or not to engage in an activity, when to initiate or terminate an activity, alternative means to accomplishing objectives, choices of partners for activities, choices of location for activities, need for assistance, food choices, decisions about the quality of work, and choices of students for relief from work.

While many of these choices and decisions appear to be quite logical, they may not be provided unless a conscious effort is made on the part of teachers to include them as part of their daily classroom programs. Schools need to take responsibility for providing retarded students with decision-making opportunities in an explicit and direct manner by incorporating such opportunities into the special education curriculum.

The results of this study also suggest the possibility of a negative correlation between work-oriented programs and the frequency of decision-making opportunities provided to students. As classroom programs become more oriented toward the world of work, exemplified in this study by research site 2 (Office skills) and research site 3 (Custodial skills/grounds maintenance), decision-making opportunities for students become less available. This finding is

consistent with the belief that most retarded individuals do not have a large number of decisions to make in the performance of their work.

Special educators who are responsible for curriculum development should carefully examine this negative correlation between work training and decision-making opportunities for two reasons. First, work training programs should be reassessed to determine if more decision-making potential for students can be incorporated into such programs. If it is believed that more decision-making opportunities can be offered to students in their work training programs, curriculum specialists should help classroom teachers to accomplish this goal. If, however, it is determined that the potential for student decision-making is limited due to the work orientation of some special education programs, efforts need to address the ways in which teachers can provide decision-making opportunities for their students in other curriculum areas.

The analysis of students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities teachers provide to them indicates that a hierarchy may exist in the complexity of decisions and choices offered to students; some decision-making opportunities appear to be easier for students while others may be more difficult. Future curriculum development should address this issue in order to assist teachers in planning and implementing appropriate decision-making

opportunities for their students who may differ in age, social maturity and functioning level. Decision-making may be seen as a continuous progression or succession of choices building from routine decisions such as choices of work location and food preferences to more complex decisions such as choosing alternative means to accomplish objectives and making decisions regarding the quality of one's work. With careful and deliberate consideration, these decision-making opportunities can be incorporated into the special education curriculum.

The results from this study also show that teachers demonstrate a strong tendency toward providing decision-making opportunities to individual students rather than to groups of students. Allowing individual students to make their own decisions and choices is important; however, the curriculum also needs to address group decision-making processes. Students with moderate to severe intellectual limitations are members of groups; their peers and their families play a significant role in their lives. These students, when they leave school, will usually remain with their families at home or they will be placed in residential group homes or institutions. In either case, it is hoped that they will become contributing members of a group. Consequently, they must have the skills necessary for effective group decision-making. Such skills and decision-making opportunities need to be explicitly addressed within

the curriculum and the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

The philosophy of special education has been promulgated on the premise that all children, regardless of their handicaps, have worth to their families and communities. Special educators have dedicated their careers toward helping exceptional students to reach their maximum potentials for becoming responsible, contributing, and productive members of society.

Inherent in these goals of special education programs is the idea that intellectually limited students need to learn as much independence as possible in order to become productive members of society. Independence implies the ability to make choices and decisions for oneself and to take responsibility for one's actions.

Special educators have long been committed to analyzing the weaknesses or deficits that handicapped students exhibit and to making plans to teach the skills and behaviors necessary to overcome those weaknesses and deficits. The need to teach such skills and behaviors cannot be denied. However, attention must also be given to the long range goal of building independence in handicapped students. This goal demands that special educators begin to recognize the importance of providing opportunities for their students to make choices and decisions to the extent that their abilities allow them to do so. This study clearly shows that teachers

can and do provide such opportunities, even though the prescribed curriculum does not address decision-making explicitly.

Teacher education programs need to emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in providing decision-making opportunities to handicapped students. In-service training and staff development meetings can bring the topic of decision-making to the attention of experienced teachers. Teacher education programs must first provide teachers with evidence regarding the potential benefits of student decision-making. In addition, teachers need to learn that a full range of decision-making opportunities exists and that these opportunities can be incorporated within the daily structure of their classroom programs. This research also suggests that there is a hierarchy of choices and decisions -- some are routine (i.e. food preferences) while others are more difficult and complex (i.e. alternative means to accomplishing an objective). Teachers should be made aware of this hierarchy in order to plan accordingly based on the needs and intellectual abilities of their students. School systems and college programs will have to systematically plan appropriate strategies to accomplish these objectives.

Teachers play a significant role in the process of providing opportunities for students to make decisions and choices. It is therefore crucial that teacher education programs assist teachers in recognizing and accepting decision-making as an important component of the school

curriculum. The results of this study clearly show that a variety of decision-making opportunities can be provided to intellectually limited students. Information such as this needs to be shared with teachers in order to assist them in planning and implementing appropriate decision-making opportunities within their own classrooms.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to observe, analyze and describe the types of decision-making opportunities provided to moderately and severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, within special education classrooms. While this research has validated the choice-making categories proposed by Shevin and Klein (1984) and has expanded that category system to include the other types of decision-making opportunities, a variety of issues related to this topic still require further examination.

Research regarding the category system of decision-making opportunities

There is a need for more investigation of the categories of decision-making opportunities which can be provided to special education students. This study was conducted with a limited population of teachers and students. Future research should be completed to apply the decision-making categories evidenced by the results of this study to other classrooms of various age levels. This type of research can help to

determine the validity of the category system and may possibly uncover new categories of choices and decisions.

This research was primarily concerned with the types of decision-making opportunities provided to students between the ages of 16 and 21 years. Questions remain regarding the types of decision-making opportunities teachers provide to students at younger age levels. An examination of the similarities and differences that exist among various age levels can provide information that will be helpful in developing decision-making as a component of the entire special education curriculum. Curriculum development in this area will need to focus attention on how to incorporate decision-making opportunities at all age levels and across all curriculum areas.

Another issue that requires further research involves the relationship between the types of choices and decisions made by students at school and the types of choices and decisions provided by the students' home environments. Decision-making is an ongoing process that needs to be emphasized and practiced both at school and at home. If developing the autonomy of students is one goal of special education, then the families and teachers of these students need to work together to provide the experiences necessary to achieve that goal. Teachers and families can offer support to one another in providing real-life experiences for making choices and decisions to handicapped students. Without the cooperation of both the home and school environments, choice-

making opportunities for these students can only be considered artificial. Future research should therefore compare the types of decision-making opportunities which can be offered to students at home and at school in an effort to expand the choice-making categories defined by Shevin and Klein and this study.

Research regarding limited choices and multiple choices

It has been discussed previously that most of the category 1 decision-making opportunities (choices among activities) observed in this study were really choices between activities. The teachers involved in this study generally provided only two alternatives, requiring students to choose one or the other. Rutherford (1969) supports this observation when he says, " ... in our schools we have traditionally limited freedom to "yes" or "no" situations; we have not provided many situations where genuine multiple choices are possible" (p. 90). Multiple choices may therefore be an issue that deserves further consideration by future researchers. Do teachers provide multiple choices? If so, how? If not, why not?

Decisions initiated by students

This study was primarily concerned with decision-making opportunities provided directly by teachers to their students. It is reasonable to assume that students do initiate their own choices and decisions within the classroom without the direct involvement of teachers. The types of

decisions students initiate on their own may or may not be sanctioned by teachers. Future studies should be designed to observe, describe and analyze the types of decisions which are initiated by the students themselves.

Students' perceptions of decision-making opportunities provided at school

There has been no research completed as yet to explore the perceptions of retarded students regarding the decision-making opportunities provided to them at school. The ambiguity of category 2 decisions (whether or not to engage in an activity) has been discussed earlier. When teachers ask questions such as "Would you like to cook?" or "Do you want to vacuum the rug?", are true choice-making opportunities being provided? The answer to this question depends on both the intention of the teacher and the perception of the student. How do students perceive such questions? It has been hypothesized that while some students may indeed perceive such questions as choice-making opportunities, the possibility also exists that some students view the same questions merely as directions, commands, or suggestions from the teacher. It appears then, that student perceptions of decision-making opportunities are important in determining the extent to which students act upon those opportunities. Consequently, more attention needs to be given to this issue.

Individual and group decision-making opportunities

This research has clearly demonstrated that the teachers involved in this study offered more decision-making opportunities to individual students than to groups of students. While the importance of providing such opportunities to individual students cannot be overlooked, questions remain regarding how teachers can facilitate group decision-making processes within their classrooms. Group decision-making experiences may have potential benefits in developing cooperative work skills among students. Students also need to recognize that others may have valid ideas and opinions which may be different from their own. In addition, students need to be aware that their decisions may have an impact on other people around them such as their peers and teachers. For these reasons, future research needs to be conducted to determine how group decision-making opportunities can be incorporated into the school curriculum.

SUMMARY

The results of this study demonstrate that a variety of decision-making opportunities can be and are provided to moderately and severely intellectully limited students, ages 16-21 years, within the special education classrooms studied. It appears that the frequency of decision-making opportunities provided to such students may be somewhat dependent upon the type of classroom program in which the students are enrolled. The data suggest that the more work-oriented a classroom program is, the less opportunity there

may be for students to make their own choices and decision.

Based upon the observational data of students' immediate responses to the decision-making opportunities provided to them, it appears that some types of decisions and choices may be easier and more routine for students to make while other types may be more difficult, requiring more independent thought from students. This research also demonstrates that Shevin and Klein's (1984) choice-making category system is not exhaustive and that other types of decision-making opportunities can be offered to intellectually limited students. In addition, the data also provide evidence that the participating teachers in this study had a tendency to provide decision-making opportunities to their students at a slightly higher rate during morning hours as compared to afternoon hours. Furthermore, lower functioning students received more opportunities to make decisions and choices and teachers provided more decision-making opportunities to individual students rather than groups of students.

While more research by practioners and researchers is necessary, it is clear that special education classrooms can provide environments where student decision-making and choice-making can be facilitated. This research has shown that teachers <u>can</u> and <u>do</u> provide opportunities for their intellectually limited students to make choices and decisions for themselves, even though the special education curriculum does not explicitly address the topic of decision-making.

Future curriculum development needs to continue and enhance the commitment teachers have for incorporating decision-making opportunities within the daily structure of their classroom programs.

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, and families of handicapped youngsters need to recognize the importance of decision-making as a vital component of the school curriculum. Decision-making is a topic that should pervade the entire educational process, crossing all age levels and all curriculum areas. Schools must take responsibility for teaching handicapped students how to make effective choices and decisions for themselves to the extent that their abilities allow them to do so. If schools do not provide decision-making opportunities explicitly and directly to students, the goal of independence can only be an elusive dream for the handicapped population.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR TEACHERS/ADMINISTRATORS

As a doctoral (Ed.D.) candidate in Curriculum/ Supervision at the University of Maryland, I am presently at a point in my program where I am working on my doctoral dissertation research. In conjunction with my research committee members, I have designed a research proposal for school year 1985-1986. The research is a "field" study, requiring me to do extensive observations in three (3) different classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

My primary objective in conducting this research is to analyze and understand the daily interactions between special education teachers and their students (specifically, moderately to severely intellectually limited students, ages 16-21 years, who are involved in work training programs). The ultimate goal of this field study is to provide implications for future curriculum development in the field of special education.

As an observer in the classroom, I will be particularly interested in describing and analyzing the types of interactions that occur between students and their teachers. More specifically, I will be looking at the decisions and choices students make for themselves in the classrooms setting. Only recently has there been any research completed

on this topic and I hope to be able to expand upon previous work. I will also be attempting to "experience" daily classroom life from the student's perspective. Furthermore, as a former Parent-Infant Program teacher, I am also interested in broadening my understanding of the opposite end of the special education spectrum by observing older students. For example, how can I, as a pre-primary teacher, best prepare my young handicapped students for the working training programs they will encounter later in their school careers? What opportunities can I provide early in my students' lives that will help them to make an easier transition to occupational development programs? By observing the various activities and interactions in classrooms, I hope to gain information that will lead us to a more unified philosophy regarding the ultimate goal of special education.

This study is not evaluative of teachers in any way. I am not interested in making judgements; I am merely seeking an understanding of teacher-student relationships. Teacher participants involved in the study are guaranteed total anonymity. After the study has been completed, each teacher participant will be provided with my results and interpretation. Just as the teachers will be helping me to gain access to new information by allowing me to observe in their classrooms, I hope to provide them with feedback which will in some way assist them as teaching professionals.

Procedure

I am planning to observe in three different classrooms during the months of October and November (I may also need to make a final round of observations during December). During each month, I will need to observe in each classroom for four (4) days only -- from 9:00-11:30 AM and from 12:30-2:00 PM. Teachers will be informed of specific dates prior to my observations. I intend to be a passive observer in the classroom. I will sit isolated and quietly observing and note taking. In no way will I interfere with the daily activities of classroom programs. I am interested primarily in seeing the normal routine of the classrooms in which I observe.

It is my hope that my research study will provide all of us with some insights and new perspectives. To achieve this goal, I look forward to working with you as a partner in this research project!

APPENDIX B

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

October (Round 1)

Friday, October 11:	Research site #1
Monday, October 14:	Research site #3
Tuesday, October 15:	Research site #2
Wednesday, October 16:	Research site #1
Thursday, October 17:	Research site #3
Monday, October 21:	Research site #3
Tuesday, October 22:	Research site #2
Wednesday, October 23:	Research site #1
Thursday, October 24:	Research site #3
Friday, October 25:	Research site #2

November (Round 2)

Monday, November 4:	Research site #3
Wednesday, November 6:	Research site #1
Thursday, November 7:	Research site #2
Friday, November 8:	Research site #3
Monday, November 11:	Research site #1
Tuesday, November 12:	Research site #3
Wednesday, November 13:	Research site #2
Monday, November 18:	Research site #2 (morning)
	Research site #1 (afternoon)
Tuesday, November 19:	Research site #3
Wednesday, November 20:	Research site #1
Thursday, November 21:	Research site #3
Friday, November 22:	Research site #2
Monday, November 25:	Research site #2 (morning)
	Research site #3 (afternoon)

December (Round 3)

Monday, December 2:	Research site #3
Wednesday, December 4:	Research site #2
Thursday, December 5:	Research site #1
Friday, December 6:	Research site #3
Monday, December 9:	Research site #1
Tuesday, December 10:	Research site #2
Wednesday, December 11:	Research site #1
Thursday, December 12:	Research site #3
Friday, December 13:	Research site #2
Monday, December 16:	Research site #1
Tuesday, December 17:	Research site #1 (morning)
	Research site #3 (afternoon)
Wednesday, December 18:	Research site #2 (morning)
	Research site #3 (afternoon)
Thursday, December 19	Research site #2
Friday, December 20	Research site #1

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LOG SHEET

Date: _____ Total Time: _____

Research Site: _____

Time	Context	Activity	Decision/Choice Opportunities	Students' Immediate Response	Researcher's Comments

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